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TALES;

Mournful, Mirthful, and Marvellous.

BY

MRS. WILMOT WELLS,

OF MARGATE.

"I deprecate the cruel critic's stab."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND J. DENNE, MARGATE.

1827.

342.

APOLOGETICAL PREFACE.

To the kind and partial private circle, who are well and fully possest with the true and potent cause of this my first and unvisored intrusion into the literary hive, no stronger excuse, I am confident, need be offered, than that true and potent cause itself; but a published author must owe a still wider range of responsibility, and, having once ventured to hold a pastoral, not only incurs the opinion,

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but the sentence, *of an* impartial Public: *should that opinion and sentence happen to prove* favourable *to the aspirant for literary success, there remains little necessity for apologizing for an* agreeable *surprise. Few people, I believe, so long as they* are *pleased, very earnestly question* why *they are pleased; indeed, most people (particularly in matters of* this *sort) think they have a* right *to be pleased for their money. But when the* reverse *of an* agreeable *surprise is apprehended,* explanation *not only appears more justly due than in the other case, but is also likely to be much more generally demanded.*

How *I came to* write *I* cannot *tell, nor is it at all relevant to the present matter; but* why *I have ventured to* publish ought *not to remain in* doubt.

I beg leave to remind my Readers of that sad and eventful period in the annals of the world, the French Revolution, *when some of the very flower of the Gallic Nobility were, during their melancholy sojourn in this country, compelled, by pecuniary necessity, to turn the talents and acquirements of head, hands, and even feet, to the purposes of subsistence. I ought, perhaps, to ask pardon*

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"I say, my hearty, your town yonder is but dull at present, they tell me," said the Captain of the vessel to the owner of a boat called *The Rose-bud of Deal:* "you are pretty quiet there now, I fancy?"

"Too quiet for us, Captain," answered the handsome, athletic, serious-looking young seaman he thus addressed; "but I am not sorry for it, since private interest suffers through public advantage."

"Well said, my boy!" cried the Captain, slapping the young boatman on the shoulder; "ay, ay," (he continued) "there's a wide difference between peace and war: bad times for all garrison towns at present; and your young ladies who love *lobsters,* get but few of 'em now; but then these few have fell to *half price.*"

The young Boatman turned away somewhat indignantly, and walked to the other end of the deck.

stands his own course best; and before one speaks a strange ship, it would not be amiss if one was always up to a little of their lingo, which would, beyond a doubt, save many misunderstandings; but where no offence is meant, I trust there's none taken."

Will Watchit's cousin proceeded to assure the Captain that he could answer for it, his relative's abrupt deportment had more of sorrow than anger for its foundation.

"Well!" says the Captain, "what is more to the purpose, and what, indeed, I principally wanted to palaver about, is, whether either of you can recommend neat, clean, quiet lodgings in Deal, yonder, for a Gentleman, a passenger of mine, who seems to have a mind, d'ye see, to lay his bones ashore if possible, and that in your town, it seems, in preference to any other."

The young Boatman turned pale, or rather more correctly, to describe the alteration

has as good as told me that he has not a relation in the world; so they that pick up such a wreck will be no losers by the *hovel*."

"Bless your eyes," interrupted Will Watchit, who had by this time rejoined them, and now took part in the conversation; "what d'ye talk about hovelling for? Did ever Deal mariners hoist out their boats on a signal of distress from an Indiaman one second faster than they'd scud off against both wind and wave for life and death, to help a poor little perishing fishing-smack?"

He beckoned his cousin aside, and, after a short consultation between them both, returned to the Captain. "The gentleman being, as you, Sir, have described, so ill, would probably prefer a private lodging?" said Will Watchit; "or else our hotels and inns are all excellent."

"Certainly he would," replied the Captain;

boast of; and though that's saying much, 'tis saying nothing more than truth neither. But Richard's getting old; the gout has found its way to his legs, and sorrow (the best of us all is not without trouble, you know) to his heart: but he's got a nice, roomy, airy house, handsomely fitted up for the accommodation of lodgers, which he has had of the best, and taken in any time these last twenty years, ten out of which he has been a widower: but there's nothing to be found among his household stuff that looks as if it lacked a mistress's care; for his old housekeeper, the Widow Wilkins, is one of the notablest, neatest, savingest, cleanliest old souls in all Deal, be the other whom she may. Richard's beds, you must know, are all of down; his sheets are holland, and his plates and dishes, as well as tea ware, every bit of 'em real china, and all of his own importing too; but his heart's true British, and knows how to pity the af-

The young men ventured to take upon themselves to arrange the terms for their friend's apartments, who, they said, would, they knew, be very glad of a let, as would be three parts of the inhabitants of Deal, besides himself, if they could obtain the like.

The moderation of the charge surprised the Captain; but Will Watchit was inflexible in the conscientious lowness of his demand, and the young men put off from the vessel, with assurances that every thing at Richard Mainsail's should be put into an immediate state of preparation for the comfortable reception of the invalid.

The weather having, at length, become calm, warm, and settled, the sick passenger was, on the following morning, with every precaution and attention that humanity could suggest or wealth command, landed, and conveyed to the lodging previously provided for his reception, and where a most com-

pliance with the requisitions of his medical attendants and nurse, in swallowing, by turns, his medicine, and the very slight portion of nutriment which his debilitated condition allowed him to receive, and now and then a few faint but expressive signals for more air, less covering, &c. had made up and comprised the whole sum of his intercourse with his attentive and humane attendants; but soon a rapid and seemingly highly favourable change succeeded: the accents of his voice, though very low, were now no longer lost in the extremity of weakness; he began also to take, with some degree of *goût* and preference, the various light but comfortable and cordial delicacies with which his slowly returning appetite was most assiduously tempted and invited; and frequently opened, for short intervals, his sunk and long totally closed languid eyes to contemplate, in the subdued light permitted to visit his chamber, the friendly

"You are in Deal town, Sir; God be thanked for his good mercies in restoring to you the power to make the enquiry! and my name is Wilkins, the widow of (rest his soul!) as worthy-hearted a seaman as ever lost his life in his country's cause."

Mrs. Wilkins paused for one instant to absorb with her handkerchief the genuine tribute of conjugal regret; and then, in a somewhat lower key than that in which she had ended the foregoing sentence, added—

"Deborah Dawkins, your nurse, Sir, lost her good man much about the same time that I did mine, though not, poor soul! in such a glorious way." (Here again Mrs. Wilkins's enthusiasm lifted her voice once more into *alto*). "Not but, from all I have ever heard and understood, Jacob Dawkins both lived and died an honest man; and every one is not *born* to *honour*, though every one may be *reborn* to *grace:* they were inland folks,

had caused the poor gentleman, who was yet as weak as water, to downright swoon away. Mr. Myrtleton had, indeed, at a very early period of the housekeeper's elucidatory harangue, fainted; but, to the great relief of the two much dismayed matrons, he was soon again restored; and exhibited, during the remainder of that day, various new and flattering symptoms, which they would, perhaps, have taken for improving ones, but which, in the joint opinions of his medical assistants, savoured rather of increase of mental irritation, than of bodily energy.

"Pray, do you know—can you inform me whether —," were half-uttered interrogations which frequently burst from the lips of the invalid, and which he would indiscriminately address to all who approached him; but as often as he had proceeded thus far, he would turn pale, tremble violently, and

a wish of the invalid, that a particular trunk which he had described to her, and which, among several others of his, had been placed in an attic, might be opened, and some labelled papers which it contained brought into his apartment. Meanwhile his bed-room door, which had remained ajar, was softly opened, just wide enough to admit a little fairy form of matchless loveliness, which, cloathed in the deepest mourning, stole in on tiptoe, holding its little fat wax-like finger up to its pouting cherry lips: it gently glided in, and, approaching the bed, half curiously, half timorously gazed upon the sick man.

Myrtleton's soul seemed to go forth at his eyes, as they caught the glance of the angel face now rested on his counterpane.

"My God! 'tis *Mary*'s very countenance!" he exclaimed, in the choaked accents of an almost dying surprise.

"Yes, *I Mary—Mary Mainsail!*" cried

the smiling innocent, disclosing all its tiny lily teeth. "Old Richard Mainsail my nown *grandtaa*."

A long pause succeeded, during which the little girl was busied in fingering and admiring the various richly gemmed rings worn by the invalid, who had unconsciously extended his attenuated hands to detain her. The child, thus encouraged, accordingly climbed up the bed steps, and composedly seated herself in Myrtleton's arms.

"Where is your mother, darling?" whispered the strongly agitated invalid, when he could speak.

"Gone a *God-a-mighty*," replied the child, in a mournful tone, and turning upwards, as it spoke, its blue lustrous eyes.

"And has not your grandtaa gone to him, too?"

"No; grandtaa down 'tairs, read his big Bible," somewhat testily replied the little one,

being rather interrupted in her delightful survey of the shining rings by such an inundation of interrogatory.

There now ensued another and a still longer pause, during which Myrtleton wept most bitterly.

"And what is this, sweet one?" said he, touching a narrow black riband which hung from the child's bosom.

"Oh, dat Mary's pretty father, dat poor mother give her!" cried the child, drawing from the cherub rest of her little downy bosom the miniature of a handsome young man, in military costume.

"'Tis my own likeness!" cried Myrtleton, and sank back upon his pillow in utter insensibility.

"No, no!" cried the child, impatiently reclaiming the treasured portrait from his now nerveless grasp; "I tell you 'tis Mary's *own father!—gentlein*, go *seep*," she added, as the

nurse re-entered with the specified papers; *gentlein* go *seep*, and Mary will hush him aby, aby!" then twining her little arms round Myrtleton's neck, and laying her velvet cheek close to his, she would soon have cooed herself to sleep in earnest, but was forcibly disengaged from her hold, and carried from the chamber, still crying "I will come back, and hush gentlein aby, aby!—I will, I will!"

Myrtleton's swoon was long and deadly, and his recovery from it equally slow and vacillating. The whole household blamed the nurse for that neglect of the door of the sick man's room which had given facility to the ingress of the little intruder; and poor Deborah was, of all the rest, the most severe upon herself: yet as the quivering, waning flame of Myrtleton's life once more resuscitated in its late nearly forsaken socket, it was again remarked, with surprise, that his

mental powers strengthened with a rapidity with which the progress of his corporeal energies were ill able to keep pace. The child he could scarcely ever be prevailed on to part with from his arms, save when air, food, exercise, or sleep, indispensably claimed the temporary relinquishment of her beloved society; and hardly ever slept himself, unless lulled into a transient slumber by her innocent hushaby.

"I am truly glad that our dear *bab* is such a comfort to you, Sir," said Mrs. Wilkins, one day; "and so is her *grandtaa*, and poor Will Watchit too, who doats upon the child, and who, indeed, has never yet been glad of any thing since her precious mother, who was once upon a time to have been his wife, died."

"I understood that my landlord never had a *son*," said the invalid; "so suppose that his deceased daughter (the mother of my

he was no more the *father* of her *child*, than *you are*. *He*, a blessed fellow! no, no! he would have *died by inches* before he would have taken so *base* an advantage of a poor girl that *trusted him!* But *marry* her, for the matter of that, and so he would a *thousand* times over, too, if it had been needful, even *after* her *misfortin;* but Mary said she did not *deserve* to be made an honest woman of, and least of all by him whose heart she had broken. Little Mary, here, was born just nine months after the ——— Regiment embarked away from hence, to fight *Boney;* and we always did surmise that the child's father was to be found amongst its officers; but Mary would never, while she could keep about at all, own to any thing, nor had she, indeed, ever been seen to go with any of the red coats; but she used to love to be for hours and hours together, at the house of an aunt of her's, who lived in the Walmer road,

where, for certain, many of the soldier officers did come a visiting of her aunt's fine lodgers; but the Lord above only knows which of them it was, or how the devil gifted him with the art to wheedle poor Mary out of her virtue, who was, before that wretched time, the most upright and modest girl the sun ever shone upon; ay, and the handsomest too! *Truly* was she called the *Rose-bud* of *Deal!* Poor Will Watchit named his *boat* after her customary title; but soon, soon did he behold his Rose-bud wither, for that *fatal slip* broke her heart, and with it *his* heart, and her *old father's too;* for though he keeps a quiet *outside,* old Richard's going as fast as possible to where his *only one* has gone before him. But come, Sir, 'tis time to take your cordial; Lord knows, you seem to have special need of it! Why, the gay, proud, hard-hearted villain who did all this mischief could not look worse if he had been

a hearing his own, than you do. But, as I was saying—poor Mary pined away in silent, heart-stifled sorrow—wasting and wasting just like *salt in water.*"

"How long is it since she *died?*" faintly demanded her trembling auditor.

"About eleven months, Sir," replied the housekeeper: (wiping the full tears from her eyes) "she had, as I have said, been visibly failing all the time of her pregnancy; and the doctor would, therefore, not have let her attempt to *suckle* her *bab,* only that (Lord, forgive us all!) she had once or twice tried to destroy herself; so doctor H**** thought if the new-born was left dependent on her life for its nourishment, she might be brought to endure that life, while it lasted, for *its* sake, if not for her own, or even that of her *more* than *both precious soul.* And so, indeed, it turned out exactly; for she took (poor young thing!) to her little bab amazingly,

and lingered on, contrary to all expectation, even better than a full twelvemonth after she had weaned it, which she would not do, neither, till it could run away out of her arms. Oh, yes! doctor H**** is a famous man, indeed, as you, Sir, have so lately experienced; but all his skill could not save *her*. Just before she breathed her last sigh she made me loose that very picture from her neck, which she would never before let any human creature lay eye or hand upon. She kissed it with her pale cold lips for the last time; then, tying it round her baby's neck, said, 'It is your *Father's likeness*, Mary: Oh, God forgive and bless him ever!' fell back, and died.

"I think poor Will took on more than even her own father did, if that could be: he followed her to the chapel ground, with the bab in his arms, in spite of all his friends advised to the contrary, and came back as orderly

as the other mourners: but neither gates nor locks, walls nor man, could keep him from returning by himself to the grave. Night after night did he make it his bed; and woman only could remedy the ill which woman had caused. His aged mother fell upon her knees beside him upon the cold damp sod, and prayed him not to send her white hairs down to the dust in sorrow by dying before her. *Will* is her only child, and has long been also her only support and comfort: he rose up at his mother's bidding, and grew more settled from that moment; but—Lord, be good unto us!—we shall talk this poor soul to death: see if he is not *off* again!"

The remorse-racked soul of the culprit seemed, indeed, *this* time, to have finally escaped its house of mortal punishment. It was long, very long, ere the faintest sign of existence could be perceived; but when once more the dormant spark of ethereal fire was

reblown into a flame, it still seemed to gather increased strength from that very cause which had threatened its final extinction. In twelve hours after receiving the above communication, he entreated the presence of God's true servant, the Rev. Mr. **********, who remained with him more than four hours. From this solemn visit Mr. Myrtleton appeared to have derived a large accession of mental consolation: the next day he was attended by a gentleman of the law, to whom he dictated a will, which, being in a few hours completed, was signed by himself and four witnesses. This will was then deposited in the hands of the worthy clergyman: Myrtleton survived its completion several hours, though seemingly in an utterly lethargic state; from which he, at length, suddenly aroused, to enquire for his child.

"Yes, *my child!*" he iterated with more than human emphasis.

The child was brought, and sprang, according to her invariable custom, to his bosom: for a few moments he silently gazed upon her cherub countenance with a look in which all the master passions contending in his fast-breaking heart were manifest; then, taking his will from the attending clergyman, he placed it in her little hands, saying, "Now, my Mary, hush your father to rest for the last time!" He closed his eyes: one deep, one long-drawn, agonizing sigh released his struggling soul, and the earthly forfeit was completed!

Myrtleton had, while a captain in the —— regiment, stationed in Deal Barracks, become fascinated by the exquisite loveliness and native graces of the innocent Mary Mainsail, whose *hand*, indeed, was the promised property of William Watchit, but whose *heart* had hitherto slept the sleep of careless, easy, unanimated indifference, till love

curred between them at her own house, in the Walmer Road; but on the evening which preceded the departure of the regiment from Deal, the insidious lover prevailed on the simple aunt, who had accepted from him various valuable presents, to permit their last meeting to be entirely private. The adieus of the tender and afflicted Mary were mingled with heavy sighs and heart-wrung tears: terrified for the safety of her lover, who, she was but too well aware, was going to immediate battle, she fell into a paroxysm of grief and fear; and, finally, at the dreadful moment of what she feared would prove an eternal separation, fainted in his perfidious arms; and regained perception, only to mourn the bereavement of her honour and his ultimate departure together!

Stung by regret and remorse, and blasted by shame, she had brooded in despairing silence over her calamity, till *nature* unfor-

tunately revealed it for her; but the name of her betrayer her lips refused to disclose; and that secret would have died with her only confidant, the imprudent and greatly repentant aunt, whom an apoplexy soon after hurried out of the world, but for the voluntary acknowledgment of the criminal himself when upon his death-bed, as tendered to the Rev. Mr. *********.

To the above particulars, Mr. Myrtleton added the further information, that in the very first action which took place after the arrival of the regiment in Belgium, he had received a dangerous wound in his side, which, though after some time of exquisite suffering, superficially healed, had most undoubtedly laid the foundation of the torturing internal malady which soon after commenced its ravages; and had, from its very first germination, been incessantly, though insidiously, bending him towards the grave.

At the conclusion of the war, he had, in consequence of his wearing indisposition, quitted the service, and repaired, on invitation, to spend some weeks at the country seat of a noble friend in Oxfordshire; where, partially recovering his health and spirits, he had, at a neighbouring assembly, chanced to dance with the only child and sole heiress of a wealthy merchant of South America, of which quarter of the globe the elegant Miss Rodriguez, who was of Spanish descent, was herself a native. This young lady, who had received her education in England, had become, not many months before her first introduction to Myrtleton (by the news of her father's decease at Lima), the undisputed mistress of a fortune of eighty thousand pounds. The flattering prepossession in favour of her accomplished partner, which the Peruvian heiress had but too evidently manifested, failed not of producing the most

inflammable effects upon the vanity, the gallantry, and the self-interest of the flattered object of so distinguished and disinterested a preference. The lady was the *elève* of a near relation of Myrtleton's noble host, and, fortunately to his wishes, resident in the neighbourhood. An acquaintance (most assiduously cultivated on his part) ensued, during which the fair and wealthy heiress more and more unreservedly fanned the aspiring flames of a passion which she believed kindled at the altar of love, but which, in truth, only derived its existence from the torch of ambition. Nor did she long refuse to the ardent siege of the young soldier the entire surrender of heart, hand, and fortune; and while the poor neglected *Rose-bud of Deal*, which his intemperate passion had blighted, was suffered to bend, laden with its bosomed canker, in withering desertion, the false Myrtleton won to his triumphant

arms a *richer* but not a more *deserving* bride.

Soon after his union with Miss Rodriguez, the discovered perfidy and extensive peculations of the agent employed in the care and direction of her immense property in South America, induced Myrtleton to accompany his lady (then in the most interesting of all female conditions) back to her native country, where, a few months after her arrival, she died in child-birth of a son, who did not long survive his youthful mother.

The duties of respect which he owed to his generous wife's memory, as well as a severe accession of his hitherto only dormant complaint, detained Myrtleton some time in America: at length, burthened with excessive wealth, wasted by incurable disease, and goaded by an awakened and ulcerated conscience, he embarked for Europe, resolved to offer (if life should hold out so

long) a late, but heart-dictated reparation to his injured Rose-bud! But long ere the tempest-troubled and unusually protracted voyage was terminated, the violent exacerbations which sea sickness the most excessive occasioned to his already almost insupportable malady, joined to the perpetual gnawings of remorse, and the severe local inconveniences and deprivations which he unavoidably experienced in consequence of the loss of his faithful valet, who died of an inflammatory fever at the very commencement of the voyage, all united to throw him into a state of complicated suffering which hourly menaced his dissolution, and, finally, nearly deprived him of the mental sanity, as well as corporeal energy, necessary to accomplish the dearest, and now last remaining purpose of his soul,—namely, the acknowledgment of his crime.

It may, perhaps, be interesting to add, that

Mr. Myrtleton's will, of which his noble friend in Oxfordshire, and a certain commander of high military fame, were named the executors, after providing very handsomely for the infirm and aged father of poor Mary, and the respectable and venerable mother of William Watchit, during their lives, bestowed upon that devoted lover himself a legacy of ten thousand pounds; to his acceptance of which bequest was annexed the sole guardianship of his loved Mary's offspring, but which office was, on his refusing the terms of the testament, to revert to the nobleman before named as joint executor of the will. To the *child* herself, with the exception of a few other handsome legacies, among which the names of the Rev. Mr. **********, the friendly Captain, his two medical assistants, and those of his kind and attentive Deal nurses, appeared conspicuous, Mr. Myrtleton bequeathed the *whole residue*

my only remaining prospect of happiness in this life, to act a father's part by her; and none but God and my own heart can witness upon what bitter terms I now obtain the privilege!"

He caught up the child, and closely clasped her to his labouring bosom, while his heavy tears fell fast upon the beauteous head amidst whose silken ringlets his glowing face declined.

THE SHARPERS;

OR,

HOW TO WIN A SUPPER.

Part I.

Advertisement.

The Italian Scholar will most probably, on reading the respective opening schemes of my Four Heroes, readily recur to a little story extant in the Italian Comic Novella, and as readily perceive at how early a stage of my Fable the resemblance which may have struck him entirely ends.

S. W. WELLS.

Immediate separation appeared, indeed, the most probable pledge of their general safety; but in those sworn brothers the love of sociality, equally prevalent with that of craft, seemed to acquire accession of strength from that very menace of danger, which, acting on less constant principles, might have occasioned its entire extinction; so, like their illustrious countryman of old, magnanimously banishing those misjudging rulers who had banished them, they turned their backs on Rome, and took, in company, their way towards the smiling and yet untried, untrodden fields of Tuscany.

Disguised as way-worn pilgrims, they languidly entered the grass-grown streets of the once busy and once populous city of Pisa, leading with them a young light-coloured ass, whose panniers contained the whole and entire stock and amount of their worldly goods and possessions; but, had our penitents been

at that moment called upon to make their final audit at the dread justice-seat of Minos, that impartial and unerring judge would, after assigning their souls to Pluto as his most uncontestible fee, have found it a matter of not quite as facile compassing to dispose of the before-mentioned ass, its panniers, and their multifarious contents, either as readily or as equitably.

Many summonses must have been issued, and notices posted up, both in the upper and nether worlds, demanding the attendance of the various parties to whom those numerous and heterogeneous properties had formerly truly and distinctly appended, and, moreover, various perplexing, and probably not remarkably brief, chancery suits might have been expected in Erebus, ere the several contending claimants had litigated, and obtained that portion of justice which law usually dispenses: this much, however, is certain, that,

to whomsoever the refundment or allotment of the articles in question might have reverted, our *four gentlemen defendants* would, after passing the verge of existence, have remained quite as bare as they were when first entering upon it.

Each of those seeming pilgrims, who were distinguished among themselves by the names of *Reynardi, Fabricio, Jiacomo,* and *Salatro,* were severally received, and hospitably entertained and accommodated for the night, at the dwellings of different Pisaynian tradesmen. Fabricio's host was a merry, pacific, punchy, little wine-merchant, full as mellow, but not quite as *spirited,* as the liquor he vended. The entertainer of Jiacomo was a fat-headed butcher, a very *Achilles* for bravery, but not *too well read.* It was Salatro's chance to become the guest of a rich baker's ugly widow, who could, in fact, not read at all, yet fancied herself both handsome and

erudite, and dearly loved to be ogled and discoursed, as if other folks thought her so too: and Reynardi's quarters were fixed for the time being with an old, infirm, jealousy-crazed oil-dealer, newly yoked, for the sins of his youth, to a lovely, sprightly, mirth-loving lass, scarcely yet sixteen.

Charity, we are taught, covers a multitude of sins; and in good truth, notwithstanding the very opposite precepts and practice, too, of a certain sect, whose convenient and saving doctrines have become but too fashionably prevalent, we do not scruple to own ourselves of the same antiquated opinion, regarding faith without good works as of little better worth than the barren fig-tree; though, in sooth, it must be admitted that the charity of the pious Pisaynians did extend its ample skirts a little too widely, when they eagerly wrestled for the holy honour of suc-

couring our four worthies, upon whom they literally squandered away their good things.

Still the fault of these simple folk was, at worst, but one upon the right side; and it is furthermore chronicled, to the credit of even religion's wrapping gowns, that those *wolves in sheep's clothing* kept, during their sojourn beneath the rafters of their zealous entertainers, an uninterruptedly holy sabbath from all species and degrees of peculation whatever: thus fully exemplifying the truth of the proverb, which alledges that there *may be honour even among thieves.* It is, besides, affirmed (but this we do not presume to promulgate as an indubitable verity), that their characteristic parting benedictions on the kind Pisaynians proved quite as efficacious as such blessings usually do turn out.

Well rested, restored, and replenished with the most delicate, seasonable, and savoury

viands, their scrips, too, each equally enriched with ample provisions for a mid-day luncheon, did our *saints* sally forth the next morning, and, reassembling at an obscure *osteria*, where they had on the preceding night deposited the ass and his burthen, they together proceeded towards a ruinated and utterly deserted villa, which they had previously noted and reconnoitered, situated not far from the environs of the city: here they set up their temporary rest, well assured of its proving to them, if not a convenient, at least a safe and uninterrupted asylum; and, collecting and drawing around them, with almost instinctive appreciation, the few scattered and dilapidated *agremens* which it still afforded, they passed the first day and night of their abode in this new residence in a divided and diversified course of conviviality, consultation, and repose.

The ensuing morning was devoted to

action; and, having doffed their wigs and their beards, their wrinkles, contractions, and rheumatisms, together with all the attendant paraphernalia of gowns, cloaks, hoods, staves, scrips, and scallops, having, in fine, as much as was humanly and theatrically possible, *recreated* themselves and their costumes, they set forward, but at distinct intervals and separate paths, for the so lately left city of Pisa, charged with the laudable purpose of paying second visits to their recent hospitable hosts, in the characters of *old friends with new faces.*

Signior Reynardi it was who led the van of this redoubtable achievement; and on the very succeeding morning to that on which he had taken his departure from the abode of Gasparo Baldi, the old oilman, did he, in a completely different form and character, present himself to his utterly unrecognizing entertainer: the address of his warehouse,

which was situated at some distance from his dwelling, he had previously accurately ascertained; and so completely and entirely was his hair, complexion, gait, figure, voice, dress, and address, metamorphosed, that quicker senses and more acute intellects than those of the purblind, palsied, and credulous bridegroom, might have proved equally unequal to the offices of recollection and detection of his late age, travel, and penance-worn pilgrim guest. A broad-laughing, youthful, and ruddy visage, heightened to a glow even beyond its natural tint by the aid of *vermilion*, was now released from the shade of long and thick elf locks of grey hair, by which it had lately been nearly hidden: those venerable tresses, to which a comely beard of the same time-blanched hue had served as an indispensable appendage, were now exchanged for a smooth chin and a bright

carroty pole of coarse and crisped curling hair, overtopped by a little loobying hat, shaped (most of any thing) like unto a platter: red worsted hose with blue clocks, a pair of clouted brogues, and a fustian frock with brass buttons, completed the masquerade habit of Signior Reynardi, who had, moreover, provided himself with a moderate sized barrel, into which was thrust a large piece of new sponge.

On arriving at the oil depôt of his late friendly entertainer, he divested himself of the vessel which he had hitherto borne on his shoulder with very little ceremony, allowing it to alight upon the stone sink by which the oil vats were surrounded, with such a bounce as made the infirm vender of olive-juice to start up, in terror and dismay, out of his big leathern arm-chair, in which he was wont to sit at the receipt of custom, oft-

times relieving the tedium of delay between the entrance of one customer and another by a short nap.

With much tremor and emotion, occasioned by the ungentle manner in which his usual devotions to Morpheus had been broke in upon, the senior civilly enquired the commands of the boisterous boor, who, in a coarse voice and *bergamasco* accent, replied, "Why, gaffer, somebody must fill this two gallon barrel with best olive oil, for my master, Signior Lazarro Malatesta, the Notary. But, death's heads and cross bones! what has such a poor old drivelling daddy as you, with one foot in his grave already, done to be set here to mind shop, stead of mumping your oil pap and coriander by the hearth side at home? But, here, old skin-and-bone, tell me which is the right vat, and I'll help myself. Nothing like showing respect to age."

The would-be-thought vigorous bride-groom of youth and loveliness was not a little chagrined at a style of address and mode of condolence equally harsh, just, and unseasonable; yet, blessing his friendly stars that the unwelcome impertinence of his rustic customer was uttered out of the hearing of his vernal helpmate, he proceeded, with more nimbleness than his appearance promised, to deal out the required commodity, which having measured, he by means of a funnel poured into the bunghole of the barrel.

"But you must let the barrel bide here a while yet, though, before I can pay you for the oil, gaffer," said the pretended lout, "because I have a sum to receive first for master from Gabriello Strozzi, the rich woollen-draper, whose shop is over against the *Albergo Reale;* and then I will come back directly and fetch it away. But do you hear? Mind my advice, gaffer; get to bed as soon

newly set up in business here, will draw it up for you in all clerk-wise fashion, and, besides, write a *crocodile* to it as long as you please into the bargain: and since one good turn deserves another, as *he* has began by giving you *his* custom, *you* may as well finish by letting him have *your's*."

Having so spoken, the pretended domestic of Signior Malatesta took an hasty departure; not, indeed, exactly towards the abode of Gabriello Strozzi, the rich woollen-draper, over against the *Albergo Reale*, but back again to the ruined villa, designing there to quietly await the sufficient absorption of old Gasparo Baldi's best olive oil into his faithful and retentive sponge, whose innumerous mouths were all as indefatigably as effectively employed in that most consequent and profitable operation.

The next of those noble knights of invention who volunteered his *devoir* was Signior

called *Vincentio Melo*, and was, as we have before specified, a vender of the heart-inspiring juice; and, fastening his beast to the doorway, entered the shed with the long stride and assured step of a ready-money customer. With a practice distorted countenance malignly squinting from beneath a wild bush of coarse raven hair, he surveyed his good-humoured host, and then, with a ferocious voice, most resembling the growl of a hungry bear disturbed at his dinner, enquired the stated market price of the best red wine of seven vintages age.

Somewhat surprised at the ominous tones of his new customer, the rubicund dealer nevertheless specified, with nearly all his accustomed suavity of sound, the regular price of his nectar, and was thereupon, with a most ungracious *humph!* directed to measure off eight gallons.

While thus employed at the furthermost

cistern, Fabricio, with the celerity of thought, disengaged his barrel from the ass's back, and adroitly and silently set it upon a stand designed for that purpose, taking care to place the bung-hole uppermost, into which he also officiously inserted a funnel. By this time the vender had brought the requisite quantity of wine in two brimming measures, and, having poured into the barrel their delicious contents, placidly waited with open palm his gentle customer's leisure to disburse the stipulated payment: but Signior Fabricio (whose designs by no means harmonized with those of the felicitous minister of Bacchus, and who had, during the operation of transferring the contents of the measures into his vessel, seemed earnestly engaged in observing some object without doors) suddenly turned short upon the honest fellow, and abruptly demanded to taste the liquor be-

fore he paid for it, motioning at the same moment to tilt the barrel.

"Hold, Signior! cried the suprised wine-merchant: "*Santo Jovanni* forbids you should find the rules and usages of the wine-trade violated beneath the shed of Vincentio Melo. Hold, I conjure you, nor shake your barrel, for the love of good liquor. Wait but a breath of time, and I will fetch you such a sample of your bargain, as will prove that I am neither a churl of my commodity, nor a vain boaster of its merits."

Thus saying, he ran off to the same cistern from whence he had just served the eight gallons of wine, and the next instant returned with a pint goblet brimful of the generous fluid, which, with a smile warm as the sun which had sublimated its flavour, he presented to the grumpish buyer.

"Pray, gaffer," cries the taster (after

draining the goblet) "call you this liquid *wine* or *vinegar?*"

"*Vinegar!* Signior," echoed the astounded dealer: "Why, 'tis not only smooth as oil and strong as aquafortis, but sweeter than honey. *Santo Jovanni* restore your palate! But surely you can be only joking?"

"*Joking!*" iterated the surly customer, calling up a still more diabolical cast of countenance; "do I *look* like a *joker?* I am apt to believe, though, 'tis *you*, sirrah, who are attempting to put off some of those sickly sort of wares upon *me*. But be assured, old *sackbut*, notwithstanding the noted harmony of your construction, I shall quickly beat you into doleful discord, unless you forthwith stint, or rather completely swallow down again altogether, your late idle rhodomontade, which is as dull, flat, vapid, and unvendible, as the vile stum it was meant to eulogize."

"Dull, flat, *vapid!*" repeated the laughing seller: "by the Lord, Padrone, but you have been tasting more wine than mine this morning; at all events, most certain it is that you cannot *see* what you *say*. A minute ago, the wine was *sour*, and now it is *vapid*."

"You *lie!*" cried the sharper, who had measured his man both mentally and corporeally, and dreaded not to hazard the retort provocative: "it is your *wit* which I said was *vapid;* it is your *wine* (I still maintain the assertion) which is *sour*."

"Then 'tis *your Lupo Manaro* visage*," cried the momently vexed factor of Bacchus, "which has turned it so, since that is sourer than verjuice itself. But here! here!" (refilling the goblet) "since a little poison kills, a load may cure; so *taste again*."

"*Vinegar*, quotha! Why the man's bewitched: 'tis *nectar*."

* A supposed spectre or hobgoblin.

"It is, in truth, a draught fit for no mortal palate," rejoined the inflexible fault finder, angrily repulsing the proffered goblet; "so speedily bring hither your measures, and receive back your potion, or I swear I will discharge the contents of my barrel into the market fountain, and prove the truth of my disparagement, and the quality of your manufacture, by poisoning half the city. Quick, quick, I say" (tilting the barrel), "or rely upon it I'll complain to the Inspector of the Wines."

"Complain to the Devil, if you will," cried the at length thoroughly enraged wine-merchant; "and to him I recommend all such pestilent customers!" then *malgre* enough (believing he had either an idiot, a drunkard, or a lunatic to deal with, and willing to recover his much-traduced wine at any rate), looking one way and rowing another, he held up successively the two measures, which,

having been duly replenished, not without a few black benedictions on both sides, he instantly carried back to and restored to his thereby somewhat impoverished store.

Meanwhile the profitable customer lost no time in bunging up his barrel, and slinging it to the ass; then, mounting the animal himself, he jogged off, at a no very slow pace, toward the ruined villa of rendezvous, laden with two gallons of excellent and very moderately diluted table wine.

The other gentlemen, Signiors *Salatro* and *Jiacomo*, were equally meritoriously employed in different negotiations, which we shall forthwith proceed to describe.

Attired in a neat gold-buttoned suit of snuff-colour, of the right calculating cut, a snug bob, and carrying also a hat, cane, and countenance all of true cent. per cent. dimensions, Jiacomo sought the dwelling of his liberal entertainer, Pietro Buffalomanzo, the

valiant butcher, and, stepping into the well-stored shop with an air of hasty earnestness, commanded the bowing apprentice to summon his master immediately, as his time was precious; and no sooner did he set his eyes upon his recent host, than he thus accosted the respect-struck *man* of *mutton*, who, perfectly unconscious of the change put upon him, stood humbly twirling his greasy thrum-cap before him.

"Pietro Buffalomanzo, you are, I learn, a young man newly set up in business?"

"Yes, honourable Signior," replied the obsequious butcher, in the most piano tone he could assume; "quite *fresh* in the trade, as one may say."

"And lately married too, are you not?"

"Ay, most serene Signior, to a tender young lamb of my mother's own rearing, as one may say, since she was an orphan brought up in our family. None of your

touchy tough old ewes for Pietro Buffalomanzo's market."

"Right, right, my good lad," cries Jiacomo, (echoing the butcher's self-congratulatory laugh): "in youth's spring, or that of the year either, who would do penance on goat's flesh, when they might luxuriate upon lamb? But, prithee, tell me, have you a good sale here for *horns?* they are getting up at the Leghorn market, I can most credibly assure you; for, since the Moors have taken to use combs to their beards, and knives to their meat, instead of making their own fingers serve the double office of disentangling the one and dividing the other, *horn* is the universal demand all over the Levant. By the bye, friend Buffalomanzo, how are your hides?"

"*Mine*'s tough enough," answered the butcher, with a discontented look: "One can't be busy before and behind too," (pointing

with one hand to his shop and with the other to his fell-yard), "and so I tell my wife: but it's early days yet; I warrant I get rid of 'em at last, as well as the rest of my neighbours. No putting me off with less than my price, because, forsooth, they pretend the market's overstocked. Why, I'd as soon blow up a fellmonger——."

"As you would a shoulder of veal, no doubt," interrupted Jiacomo.

"Ay, that I would," cries the valorous butcher, "or knock him down as readily——."

"As you would a bullock, I dare say. But all this is idle chat—mere offal to the matter I have in view; and, as I told your boy, my time is precious, so let us to the point at once. I am a man of few words, but much observation; and having, by dint of that quality with which I am gifted, discovered you, even in this short interval, to be that fitting object of my patronage which

you have been described, have, in consequence, incontinently determined to recommend you."

"Most honourable Signior," cried the butcher, "you are indeed too kind, too condescending: but, pray, don't stand being fly-blowed *here*—pray step in, and do my poor house the honour of taking a draught of wine, while my wife tosses you up a little slight fricassee of half a dozen sweet-breads, a veal kidney or two, a little marrow, and a few brains, just by way of luncheon."

"No, no, my good fellow," answered Jiacomo: "keep the *brains for your own use.* Do you think I have come hither this morning to devour your whole day's profit? No, no! I mean to put money *into* your till, not to take it *out* of it. But, first of all, do you know who I am?"

"My best benefactor you are, for certain," cries the melting butcher, wiping from his

my most abstemious master, His *Serene Excellency himself*, possesses but a *tiny* sort of appetite, seldom consuming more than a quarter of beef, half a sheep, or a whole young lamb, to his own share daily; but, then, his *suite* is incalculably extensive, and their stomachs little less so, as is too generally the case when men live at their ease, and *eat* at *another's expense:* indeed, such an immense consumption of flesh, though it may prove generally advantageous to the revenue of the state, was thought too mighty for the good city of Florence alone to supply; the most sapient *Genfalonier* has therefore, in the profundity of his discretion, wisdom, and good policy, quartered part of these most voracious worshippers of Brahma upon the ancient sister city of Pisa, where affluent markets and dull consumption are as proverbial as the lively understandings of its acute inhabitants; and I having, since

any other quarter than your's, 'tis ten to one but hunger (which is, with ambassadors as well as lower folks, the best sauce after all) may stamp upon it a perhaps highly undeserved preference."

While thus speaking, the arch rogue could ill dissemble his joy and mirth at seeing the flurried butcher snatch down, cut up, and cram into the tray, which rather resembled a *boat* for magnitude, all the prime articles in his shop: the apprentice, and even the wife herself, were loudly vociferated for to assist, and knocked their heads together, and ran the hays of confusion with their lord and master in a style of the most ludicrous character; amidst which, however, they did not omit to build up the tray into a *Babel*-like altitude; nor were the sweet-breads, the kidneys, the marrow, or even the brains themselves *omitted: they* formed a sort of honorary crown to this achievement of ingenuity,

trived to engage the butcher's attention by starting a topic of conversation widely dissimilar to the course of his devoted tray, soliciting his observation of the grand portico of the palazzo, which had evidently been lately altered and beautified in a very noble and imposing style. After, however, a sufficient period had been allotted to the escape of his confederate, he thus addressed the unsuspecting dupe:—

"Come, come, friend Buffalomanzo; you are wasting time in waiting for your tray, when you might be so much more importantly employed at home. You must hurry back, my boy, as fast as if you were running away from thieves, or you will never be in time with a *fresh assortment* of meats for his Eminence's *supper*. He dines abroad; so fail not to return hither this evening, by seven o'clock precisely, with another cargo, and enquire for me, Signior Ignatzio de Ingano, Purveyor to his

Most Serene Eminence, Prince Garaguntua Carnivoro de Golozo, Ambassador from the High and Mighty Sultan of the *Hindoos*, and boldly present your bill, since we can quite as easily, and shall quite as readily, settle your account by the *day* as by the *year*. And mark my words, *Buffalomanzo ;* if you do not find his Serene Eminence the Prince a *profitable* customer, set me down in your books for the greatest rogue in Christendom."

With a thousand most obsequious legs, the satisfied, sapient, and more than half rendered-down butcher, took his way back towards his spoliated shop, with a halo of bright calculations dancing round his brain, and enlivening with added lustre his already dazzling and dusty path; while, with spirits and expectancies no less gay and comfortable, and a pace even more accelerated than his own, the *Purveyor to the Hindoo Ambassador* hastened after his companion,

whose welcome burthen he assisted to bear, while their way to the ruined villa was lightened by laughter at the narration of the means by which that burthen was acquired.

It was now the turn of *Salatro*, who had, as yet, played but an insignificant part in this drama of peculation, to prove *his* pretensions to equal talent, by personating a principal character: the day was yet young, and he doubted not, ere its decline, to have established his title to the applause of his fellows, and the approbation of his and their eloquent and volant-heeled patron. The rich baker's ugly widow, with whom he had lately sojourned, carried on her departed husband's business, rather for the purpose of its affording her a handsome pretext for retaining his still handsomer journeyman in her *peculiar* service, than any *pecuniary* reason whatsoever. Signior Salatro had, during his very short abode with her, nevertheless, con-

menaced, hot-reeking shop of the baker's widow.

This friendly depôt of the staff of life was entered by our adventurer with a sober, solemn, and authoritative air; having, however, not omitted, previously to his *debût*, to watch out the accomplished and all effective journeyman, who, having superintended the drawing of the last batch of white bread, had now put on his jacket, and sallied forth to revive and recreate himself with a little fresh air, together with a pint of the best wine, at a neighbouring osteria which he honoured with his custom, and of which he had, since his master's decease, become the *oracle;* leaving the inferior cares and duties of conveying the bread to settled, or retailing it to chance, customers, to be discharged by his common slaves, the little apprentice, the devoted widow, and her handmaid.

and, moreover, of much mirthful marvel and delight to latest posterity. Meanwhile, as an earnest of the good I prophesy, cast thine eyes around thee on the multitudinous contents of thy shelves, windows, and counter, and reckon them as all *sold*, and sevenfold paid for: nor needest thou, fairest of all the daughters of woman, sit melting here amidst the reek of thine own oven; but arise, array thee; throw over thy comely shoulders thy veil, the safeguard of loveliness; and attend upon the expectant pencil of genius, which waits to transmit thy graces to the adoration of the universe, even unto the uttermost fag end of its duration!"

The baker's wondering widow, who understood little of this rhapsody, awaited, however, in complaisant silence its conclusion; and then simperingly and civilly enough (for what woman ever heard the sound of compliment, however foreign the language, totally un-

moved ?) entreated the good *garb-an no unce Master Expenditor* of the *monastery* of *Santo Onophrio* to be *covered,* to be *seated,* and, above all, to be more *explanatory.* Thus adjured, the solemn-faced jeerer yielded to the two first petitions of our flustered dame, and then, with amazing command of countenance, thus proceeded to accord the third:

"You must doubtless, my good sister, during the course of years in which you dutifully assisted your late excellent husband, of happy memory, in the exercise of his calling, have oftentimes heard of the universally attested and never-proved existence of the *salamander,* that conflagration-daring serpent, at once begot, conceived and nourished, by septennial flames:—but, oh, holy *Santo Onophrio!* what have the pious and innocent brothers of our most venerable order, mortified as they are in every human sense, five alone excepted, done to be selected, marked

down for, and visited by so dire and ominous a dispensation?"

Here the most respectable and veritable Expenditor of Santo Onophrio pretended to burst into a passion of excessive grief, and, pulling a knotted scourge from his bosom, began to belabour his own sides and shoulders with incredible zeal and expedition. The baker's widow, though an amazed, did not remain an unmoved or inactive spectatress of this most unexpected display of distress and discipline: she earnestly besought the Expenditor to have mercy on his own flesh, as heaven doubtless would on the *sin*, whatever it might be, which he so severely penanced, and even received several severe accidental strokes of the instrument of flagellation on her own chubby and uncovered arms, in endeavouring to prevent them from alighting on the well-shielded and encased flesh of our provident devotee.

At length he was pleased to pause in his career of mortification, and deigned to accept from her charitable hands a brimming goblet of *rosolio*, and a large almond biscuit; and no sooner had he recruited himself with these most savory and seasonable sustainers of penance, than, heaving a deep and long-drawn sigh, proceeding either from delight or dismay, as charity may determine, he thus recommenced his luminous discourse:—

"Good and humane relict of him whose *liver* was whiter than his *flour*, and whose *heart* was *unadulterated* as his bread, pardon the late phrensied acts of my piety and my regret. Alas! why should the eyes of beauty be shocked by witnessing the contortions of pain, sorrow, ugliness, and age, when they ought to gaze only upon those copies of itself which industrious love has multiplied? But I perceive curiosity peering agape from those verdant eyes, and increasing to an in-

tolerable degree of exaltation their furtive and feline fires. Know, then, that, some twenty-seven years since, a certain Canon of our holy House made an involuntary pilgrimage to the dominions of *Prester John*, where he converted (if my testimony may be deemed as credible as his own assertion) an *unaccountable* number of the natives, among the multitude of which was an *unborn male infant*. This highly favoured little creature no sooner saw the light of the world, than our holy Canon conducted him to Europe, and immediately matriculated him into the sacred bosom of our immaculate order: this wondrous child, the offspring of barbarous idolators, who worship the element of fire as their deity, was baptised by the name of our *patron saint* himself, and strictly educated in all the tenets of the only true faith There was, in his general temper and deportment, little to mark him out from other

children, till he had attained the first age of reason, which is generally supposed to commence about the seventh year of life: it was then that this Indian boy began to manifest an overweening and extraordinary attachment to *fire;* and our venerable Abbot, wishing to humour rather than divert the predilections of constitution and inclination, determined that the bias of his tastes should be consulted in the selection of his future profession, which he ordained should be that of a *Baker:* the lad was accordingly instructed in the mysteries of the oven. This arduous and important task the grave and reverend baker of our own fraternity, whose most pure soul has long since been balanced in the scales of Eternal Justice, and doubtless dealt with and rewarded accordingly to the equity with which he compounded and weighed out our loaves here upon earth, cheerfully undertook, and performed with such abundant

solicitude and success, that, when he departed from this world to receive the guerdon of his honesty and sincerity in the next, he left his young and hopeful pupil *Onophrio*, that docile and regenerated son of Satan, well qualified to practise the mysteries of his art, and occupy with honour his vacated command in the Monastery bakehouse. Onophrio was, accordingly, with all due solemnity, elected to and installed in the place of his defunct instructor.

"But, alas! the subtle leaven of idolatry remained fatally inherent in the very nature of this pagan excrescence, who, though he could not possibly remember, nay, had, it is morally certain, even never heard described the heathenish tenets and infernal rites of his accurst progenitors, still instinctively and secretly cherished such a perfect avarice of and veneration for the *element* of their sole adoration, that for *seven years*,

during which he held the office of Baker to the Monastery, *he never totally extinguished the fire of his oven:* the consequence of which most execrable and abominable neglect has been, the formation of an immeasurable and unquenchable *salamander*, which yesterday morning burst from the oven in which it was generated, and, having first swallowed up, at *one mouthful*, the wretch to whose error it owed its baleful existence, was deliberately proceeding to snap up, in the same abrupt manner, our whole goodly community, but that a little boy who assisted in the bake-house, and who, at the first appearance of the monster, had fortunately succeeded in effecting his escape, flew to the refectory with the fearful tidings, just in time to permit the Abbot to provide himself with a porringer of holy water, which, instantly discharging on the fiery monster, in the very moment when unguardedly employed in picking his teeth

after his horrid meal, it instantly, under the combined force possessed by its nature inimical and benediction endowed element, expired without a struggle; leaving us all in a state of annihilation from the terror we had undergone, from which we, after several hours, awoke as hungry as the last day of Lent; for the salamander, it was soon discovered, had, previously to issuing from his 'procreant bed and cradle,' the oven, first eaten up all the bread therein contained for our support and service!

"The Holy Father Abbot was, at first, minded to have sent me forth to procure from the neighbourhood an immediate supply; but better suggestions, equally economical as pious, presently presenting themselves to his mind, he desired that every individual of the brotherhood should, for the remainder of that day and the ensuing night, observe a strict and absolute fast: after passing upon

us this most fatuous and flatulent sentence, he shut himself within the recesses of his oratory, to commence his own particular share of penance; to enhance the rigour of which, he commanded that a large pastachio, composed of *beccafigos* and *veal* of *Sorento*, a link of *prechuto*, three new manchets, and a gallon flask of lachryma, should be forthwith displayed upon a tray, and placed before him, to remain the only companions and witnesses of his tribulation and self-command.

"Matins had long been concluded ere our ghostly director again appeared among us, when, calling a full Chapter of the Monastery, he proceeded to describe the various torments, trials, and temptings which he had, during the whole period of his seclusion and abstinence, undergone from the arch enemy of endurance and self-denial, who, assuming the various forms and effluvias of the edible and drinkable aggravators of his penance,

had, by their means, vainly endeavoured to seduce him to break it, as also of the final victory vouchsafed to his weakness, the foul fiend having finally retreated, bearing away on his dragon's wings all the untouched testimonies of his utter disappointment, defeat, and disgrace!

"The good Abbot then proceeded to edify us with a particular narration of the vision by which his slumbers, after this hard-won conquest of his grosser appetites, had been visited and rewarded; for in his sleep he had, it seems, been graced by a particular manifestation of the invisible presence of our much outraged patron, Santo Onophrio, who, by the gracious gift of silent articulation, was pleased to disclose to him the particular reason and cause why our holy House had been selected and ordained to become the melancholy scene of a prodigy so ominous as that by which we had lately been

visited, which he decidedly ascribed to proceed from the procurement, aiding, and abetment of *Santa Nulotina**, in consequence of her jealous resentment and revenge against our fraternity, occasioned by there not being one single resemblance or personification of her *santaship* either in wood, metal, stone, or canvas, throughout our whole foundation; and, furthermore, our mighty Patron completed his mission by delivering to the holy Father Abbot an especial message from the offended and aggrieved Santa herself, the purport of which was, that, unless our hitherto unconscious remissness was instantly rectified and repaired, no female sinner should ever more solicit or receive comfort from the exercise of our holy functions.

"The Abbot, prostrating himself before our Patron, had, with all due deference and compunction, promised the most implicit and

* *Nulo*, a cipher, *nonentity*.

immediate obedience to the will and commands of *Santa Nulotina*, by him so gallantly communicated; at the same time humbly intimating a wish to be informed whether the delineation of the hitherto neglected power should be copied from those divine imaginings of female beauty extant in the works of *Corregio, Raphael, Rubens,* or *Domini-cheno;* adding to the names of those *painters* of *immortals* and *immortal painters* those of very many other artists, who have touched the works of time with the pencil of eternity.

"But Santo Onophrio assured the Abbot, that *Santa Nulotina* had expressly commissioned him to declare, that, in preference to all *ideal* or *natural* beauty, either now extant, or hereafter to be delineated or begotten, she desired to be represented by the precise features, figure, form, and expression, which naturally appertained and belonged

to the chaste, wise, and handsome Paula de Farina, *widow* of the honest baker, Tomaso de Farina, resident in the Via del Herba; preferring the contour of her colossal countenance to that of even *Alecto, Megæra,* or *Tisiphone,* those formidable divinities of mythological worship; and farther requiring that he, the said Abbot of Santo Onophrio, should straightway direct and command (or cause to be directed and commanded) the said highly favoured Paula de Farina, relict of Tomaso de Farina, now resident in the Via del Herba, to immediately bind and adorn her brindled tresses with ribbons of *brickdust, sad* and *saffron hues,* and deck her chin, cheeks, temples, forehead, nose, &c. with the sufficient and fashionable complement of *patches;* as also to array herself in her very best *sacque,* not forgetting to display her jewels, but omitting by all means that badge of vulgarity and plebeianism, the

cincturino, as utterly unbecoming and unbefitting the wear of the illustrious character she is permitted to personate and embody; and, furthermore, that thus trimmed forth and attired, and covering her heart-dismaying countenance with her veil, she do, with all unimaginable celerity, repair to the painting-rooms of Signior Luco de Penelloduro, principal *Gorgon Painter* to our gracious sovereign the Grand Duca, who resides in the Strada Nova, and there (being duly forewarned of the mighty task assigned him) remain immovably fixed with palette on thumb, pencil in hand, and canvas stretched on easel, ready to transfer to it that rare semblance which is fated to alarm and astonish latest posterity.

"Thus," continued the very eloquent and veritable Expenditor of *Santo Onophrio*, "have I, most buxom of all widows, discharged, to the best of the poor capacity and

eloquence with which I am endowed, the high message with which (unworthy sinner that I am) I have been so flatteringly entrusted; but having given all the luminosity which the powers of my brain will afford to the circumstances of affliction under which our holy House is labouring, as well as to the nature of the service required of you for the purpose of representation, propitiation, and alleviation, it still remains necessary that I should, by way of bordering, fringe, or fag-end to my oration, add thereto somewhat upon that universally talismanic subject *remuneration*, without which *saints* themselves stand little better chance of getting served than *sinners*.

"Know, then, that our holy Father Abbot, sensible of the value of the concession hereby required of you, does from henceforward, and for ever, abolish in your favour the practice of *internal baking*, as used from

time immemorial in our Monastery, bestowing, from this present hour, the *whole* and *undivided custom* of our sacred foundation upon the chaste widow of Tomaso Farina, who shall, on providing our community with the daily number of fine wheaten loaves and manchets here enumerated, *claim* and *receive* her own terms for so doing, in half yearly payments, from my hands: and, furthermore, as a small additional consideration and concession for the inestimable aid required, requested, and reckoned upon from the loan of her facetious countenance in this our present hitherto unheard-of *dilemma*, he doth order that a sum, amounting to *seven* times the value of all the ready-baked bread *now* in her shop, be paid to her on delivery of the said bread at the Monastery; meaning thereby to mark in her memory this the first day of entering upon her appointment, with an earnest of that profit and advantage which

her ready obedience and sisterly assistance so deservedly claims."

Here our well propertied actor gravely delivered to the ecstasy-gasping widow two different papers, one of which was a note of the number, quality, and weight of the bread required for the daily consumption of the Monastery; the other, a formally dated, signed, and sealed order from the Abbot of Santo Onophrio, directing the Expenditor of the House to pay to Paula de Farina, immediately on presentation, the amount therein by her demanded.

"You have therefore, most gentle widow, only to specify upon this paper the sevenfold sum with which the number of your loaves will readily furnish you, and then you may count upon its being immediately transferred to your own till, with as much certainty as you may rely upon your being the *loveliest woman in the Tuscan dominions.*"

Thus ended the part of the Expenditor of Santo Onophrio; and it is hard to say whether the promise or the compliment with which he concluded most gratified the baker's relict, who, utterly bankrupt of all terms whereby to express either the excess of her joy or gratitude, sought to represent rather by actions than sounds her zeal for the new and honouring cause in which he had embarked. Springing up, then, with unwonted celerity from her seat behind the counter, she proceeded to fill a mighty basket with loaves, to appease the hunger of the holy brothers of Santo Onophrio, not forgetting, however, to number them in an audible voice: this account was by the Expenditor transferred to a paper which he put into the basket, and which, being now crammed to the uttermost, was delivered to the little apprentice, who could scarcely move beneath its weight: but his mistress, the lightness of

whose heart seemed to deny the existence of all specific gravity whatever, nevertheless bade him fly with it to the Monastery, and then return with equal expedition for a fresh supply.

It was now that the reverend Expenditor addressed himself to his departure, not, however, before he had bestowed a solemn *bénédicité* on the busy widow, who, pausing in her profitable pursuit, knelt with all due reverence to receive the pious boon; and no sooner had the holy giver, followed by the tottering apprentice, turned the corner, than, delegating the remainder of her numerical task to her maid, she sought the mystic sanctuary of her toilette, and entered with trembling hands and palpitating heart upon its pleasing toils.

The anxious Expenditor and overloaded Apprentice had scarcely proceeded half the

length of the street they had turned into, when they were joined by the alert and attentive Jiacomo, habited as a lay brother of the Monastery, towards which they were crawling at a pace which promised no very early arrival. The servitor of religion failed not in a devout obeisance of recognizance to the *purse-bearer*, while he, not a whit less reverendly and awfully than if he had been really and bonâ fide *steward* to the *Pope* in person, returned the humble genuflexion of his sly auxiliary, directing him, at the same time, to obey the dictates of christian charity, by easing that poor oppressed child (pointing to the staggering apprentice) of the burthen of the staff of life which he was bearing for all their sakes. It is unnecessary to add, that the humane and sturdy-backed lay brother needed little urging to discharge so self-evident a duty, or that the poor little

already wearied lad was as glad to relinquish his burthen as the other could for his life be to obtain it.

The humane Expenditor then laid his commands upon the boy to load himself less heavily next time, adding that he might spare himself the trouble of returning to the Monastery, as he would send two proper persons from thence to convey the remainder of the bread thither at once: with this welcome message the toil-enfranchised little fellow gladly departed, while our two devoted associates, choosing a course somewhat counter to that in which the Monastery of Santo Onophrio was situated, arrived safely with their booty at the ruined villa just in time to wish success to the winding up of Signior Reynardi's exploit, he being, at the moment of their entrance, preparing to return to old Gasparo Baldi's, for the purpose of demanding the already ordered olive oil of the best

flavour, wherewith to at once baste their meat, make their paste, mingle their salad, and illuminate the lamp of nocturnal revelry.

"Young man," said old Gasparo, when Reynardi again entered his warehouse, "you have detained me full four hours beyond my customary dinner-time, since I would not lock up my warehouse, and go home to get it, till you had got the oil for Signior Malatesta, my very honourable new customer: but," added he, in a peevish tone, "one would be apt to think, from the enormous time you have taken, that you had been employed in *coining* rather than *counting* the cash you mentioned here in the same city, and but a few streets off."

"It may seem so to *you* like enough," returned the lout; "but, gaffer, every fool knows his own business best; though, for my part, I can't for the life of me keep aloof from that of other folks; but have (worse is

my luck for it though) as ready a foot for other people's errands as for my own. So, if your macaroni is boiled to a jelly, it is only my good nature which you have to thank for the mishap; since, to tell you a bit of a secret, gaffer, I never could refuse a pretty wench a service in all my whole life, and one of those sort of little services it was, which has, by detaining me, caused your old drumsticks to beat the devil's tattoo so long.

"You must know, then, that, on parting with you, I set off in all haste for Gabriello Strozzi's, but, passing down the Via Santo Jovanni (which is, you know, right in my way thither), whistling, and with my hands stuck in my pockets, just in this guise, I heard a parrot, who was perched in a little green *jealousia* that jutted out just over my head, cry, 'Pretty fellow! pretty fellow! come in, pretty fellow, do!' so I stopped

short, and looked up, naturally thinking that the bird had called me; when one of the gratings of the *jealousia* was opened, and the sweetest, prettiest, little white pincushion hand I ever saw in my whole life appeared at it, and waved towards the house door, which stood conveniently ajar; while a voice, which sounded a thousand times sweeter than the viol at vintage-time, said, 'Pray, kind gentleman, come in!' So, faith, in I goes. Ah! old one! such a fair girl met me in the hall! With eyes brighter than dew-drops in the blue bell's bosom, dimpled cheeks, and a tiny little mouth, which opened like a scarlet bean blossom, she *seemed*——."

"Curse on her *seeming!* This was no other than my *Marinetta!*" muttered the alarmed old oil-man to himself; while the agreeable intelligencer thus proceeded with his tale:—

"She seemed hardly sixteen; and yet, gaffer, would you credit it? this pretty little

mopsy, whom one would scarcely believe had grown out of her puppet and her playthings, is a *mar·ied woman* (for she wore a wedding ring upon her finger); and *I'll* swear to her having a *sweetheart besides*."

"The devil you will!" again mumbled the tormented oil-man. "Oh! cursed, cursed Marinetta!"

"Ay, her name *is* Marinetta sure enough!" cries the clown: "oh! oh! I find I am fishing in troubled waters here. What! she's one of your children, I suppose?"

"I have no children," replied the afflicted oil merchant. "Wo be unto the hour in which my father ever begot any either!" he mentally added.

"Well, well, I am not sorry to hear she is no commodity of your's: and, between you and me, those she does belong to are not much the better off for their bargain. Oh!

she's a precious *bit;* I can tell you *that* of a surety. 'Young gentleman!' says she, with a tender, upturned eye for all the world like a *dying duck's;* 'young gentleman, I say, were you ever in love?'—'Never *yet*, if you please, Signora,' says I: 'I am but little past seventeen years old, and grandmother always advised me never to turn my thoughts towards matrimony till I had reached the age of *discretion*.

"'Alas! then, for my unhappy sex,' said the fair Signora, 'whom your grandam's cruel council have thus irreparably sentenced to life-long disappointment!'

"And then she looked upon me, and could, as I visibly perceived, scarcely restrain herself from smiling (at my prettiness, as I suppose); but soon some sad thought or other stole like an April cloud over the sunshine of her countenance, and, heaving a

great sigh, strong enough to have winnowed a whole seive full of corn, while her breath smelled for all the world like to a sweet-briar bush after rain, she laid her hand upon her breast, and said:—

"'Happy, happy youth! can you not at least feel *pity* for those whose hearts are unfortunately softer than your own?'

"'As for the matter of *that*,' answered I, 'we all have our soft places in some odd spot or other: now *mine*, my grandmother always maintained lies in my *head*, which, owing to the neglect of a stupid old midwife that poor mother had, has never been rightly closed up since I was a *bambino*.'

"'Ah! well,' cries the white-handed Marinetta, '*that* softness may serve my turn as well as if it lay lower down; so, if you will have the kindness to carry a short message for me to a certain person who is not very far off, I will give you this *pavolo*, and

as many *diaboloni di napoli** as your hat will hold into the bargain.'

"So *said*, so *done*. I accepted her promise, which was to be performed on my return with the '*certain person's*' reply: and then she straightway gave me my errand. *Ecod*, old boy! it was a *funny* one, as you shall judge. 'Set off,' said she, 'instantly, and put *wings* to your *feet* until you shall have reached the *Strada de la Pergola;* on the shady side of which you will observe a tall, handsome, well-built young student pacing to and fro beneath the piazza: you will distinguish him from all others by the breadth of his shoulders, the fine turn of his legs, an *Ovid* in his right hand, and a bunch of carnations in his left. Tell him *that jealous age is absent, and love and Marinetta impatient to receive him.*'

"*Well!* I always thought I could run, till I met with that same Signior student; but,

* A sort of sugar-plum.

faith! I found my *fullest speed* was little better than a *snail's gallop* when compared to his: no sooner did I bolt out my errand, than, ecod! he was off like a hound in full cry. Sure enough, he was *stag-hunting*, you'll say; for, as I told you before, I would kiss the cross to having seen a ring upon the girl's wedding finger."

"And cursed for an old dotard be him who placed it there!" ejaculated the ill-stared oil merchant; "but did you not," questioned he, with what appearance of composure he could manage to assume, "*follow* that same student of disgrace and infamy?"

"*Follow!*" replied the clown; "ay, bless you, gaffer, that I did, and *holla* too: but the quicker I ran, and the louder I called, the faster he flitted; and I verily believe he had got housed with 'love and Marinetta' before I had reached the end of the piazza where I had first accosted him."

"Well!" cried the breathless oilman.

"*Well*, indeed," repeated the clown; "it might be *well* for the long-legged student; but as for me, by the time I had regained the house of the parrot, I had not a foot to go upon."

"And so!"

"And so! why, gaffer, you seem very curious, methinks. Well, then, you shall hear: the confounded parrot was still squalling in the same place where I had left him, but the *lady* had vanished, and the street-door was locked; neither could knocks nor bawlings (of both which I was no niggard, I'll assure you) either gain me admittance, or even procure my well-earned reward to be thrown at my head from the window; and what's worse than all, while I waited all agape and sorrowfully and impatiently enough beneath that same *jealousia* from which that pander of a parrot had first accosted me, in hopes of being, at last, saluted with a

almost as whimsical as an old maid) had commanded that the *fritolini* should be served up cold at dinner-time, and she has not a drop left in the cruise to begin frying with till my return. And so, gaffer, as it may have happened to you, in your own young days, to have your purse lighter than your heels, or to have gone out for wool and come home shorn, take pity, I conjure you, on my present distress, and give me credit for the oil, towards the price of which I have not, at present, a single cratzi; and I swear to you, by my honesty, that——."

"Hold! scoundrel! pander! and villainous incendiary!" exclaimed the rage-frantic oil-man, who now fully found the powers of fluent articulation; "and first hear me swear, that, if thou wouldst return and replenish my empty measures with even thine own heart's blood, I would not accept of the remuneration. Knowest thou not, *fool*, as

well as *wretch*, that it was *my own wife* whom thou hast been aiding and assisting to betray, abuse, and dishonour me?"

As he spoke, he lifted, with the strength of madness, the oil-barrel up to the mouth of the vat, into which he discharged all the liquid which the modesty, or more truly the satiated appetite, of Signior Reynardi's thoroughly saturated sponge had rejected.

"Home, villain! home with thy empty vessel and still *emptier head!*" he cried (casting down the barrel, which the rogue as quickly snatched up and shouldered); "and may a cudgel from thy incensed master quickly reduce that paste-work head-piece of thine to the condition of a mill-mashed olive!"

"Ah! gaffer," returned the arch hypocrite, "*that*, at least, is a misfortune against which the long-legged student and your provident

young spouse have thoroughly fortified your's." And away he scudded from the presence of the fury-palpitating Signior, who with ten thousand execrations, not only on the authors of his disgrace, but also on its unlucky herald, shut up his warehouse at midday, and hobblingly hurried home to tax the young victim of his imaginary fondness with a *dereliction* equally ideal.

Meanwhile Signior Reynardi's return to the ruined villa was hailed with acclamations by his assembled and expectant friends: the retentive but complaisant sponge was easily accessible to the pressure of refundation, and yielded a more than sufficient supply of oil for the various purposes of domestic economy, for which its benign hoards were put into requisition; and a homely and hastily-cooked but plenteous supper seemed, to the vicious appetites of those rogues, season-

THE SHARPERS;

OR,

HOW TO WIN A SUPPER.

Part II.

The Sharpers,

OR,

HOW TO WIN A SUPPER.

SOON, however, after their memorable night of carousal, events occurred to our heroes, which, though at first seemingly cloathed in the semblance of sorrow, were productive of life-long smiles, which reflection reproved not or conscience condemned.—Returning a few days after, about sun-set, from *Pisa*, whither, gaudily tricked out in the character of a gay cavalier, he had been on some nefarious purpose, and moreover provided with a large and heavy purse of chequins, which, to forward the interests of their *Joint Stock Company of Knavery*, our adventurers had clubbed their

whole individual wealth to collect together, Signior Jiacomo was, about midway between the city and the ruined palazzo, set upon by a pair of fierce and well-armed sanguinary banditti, quite as eager for plunder as himself, and infinitely less scrupulous about the means by which it was to be acquired, since compulsion or personal violence were, to render our heroes but competent justice, as odious to their feelings and sentiments as contradictory to the fundamental laws of their association. Nevertheless, in the very important article of self-defence our cavalier (for the time being), who was by no means deficient in personal courage or prowess, deemed himself fully justified in overstepping all and every pacific obligation whatever, and his single sword was, with equal readiness and skill, opposed to the brandished stilettos of his grim assailants. The unequal contest was, however, but too soon decided: severely

wounded in the sword arm, poor Jiacomo sank to the ground, where he was soon rifled of his ill-gotten hoard; and his remorseless conquerors were just upon the point of consummating their crime by making their weapons meet in his unguarded bosom, when a brace of bullets, discharged from the pistol of a person who had advanced upon them silently and unseen, entered the back of one of the villains, who nevertheless had strength sufficient left to rush howling away to a small coppice hard by, where he had left a fleet horse, upon which, though in extreme torture, he effected his escape.

Meanwhile, the remaining ruffian was, ere he had regained self-possession sufficient to return to his cowardly purpose, grappled with by Jiacomo's stout deliverer, who, after a short but effective struggle, flung him to the earth, wrung his stiletto from his grasp, and holding it to his throat while he rested a knee

of iron upon his breast, he soon made him cry *peccavi*.

The conqueror immediately fastened the hands of the delinquent behind him with his own belt; but, while he was casting his eyes around in search of some other equally convenient ligature whereby to impose the like kind of binding bail upon the feet of his prisoner, the party for whose security he was so anxiously concerned thought good to spare him all further trouble by making quick use of a pair of remarkably long legs, while yet they might answer the purpose of saving their owner's liberty; and so exceedingly swift was his flight, that the vanquisher, who happened to be of heavy and fleshy make, deemed it a hopeless piece of imprudence to hazard an attempt at overtaking him. He therefore solely and deliberately applied himself to the recovery of the wounded man, who had fainted from pain and much

loss of blood; and, fetching some water in his cap from a little crystal rivulet which murmured near them, soon enjoyed the pleasure of witnessing the revival of his passive patient, who, unclosing his languid but sufficiently perceptive orbits, instantly recognized, in the preserver of his life, the late dupe of his dishonest artifice, the simple but courageous butcher, *Pietro Buffalomanzo*. That honest man, who was, it appeared, returning to Pisa from a visit of business to his grazier, had been directed to the scene of intended murder by the clashing of weapons and the loud and horrible threats of the villains, and had reached it but in bare time to prevent the completion of their atrocious purpose, by the well-directed aim of a pistol of which his friend the grazier had prevailed upon him to accept the loan, as a means of defence against the marauders which

were but too well known to infest the roads after sunset.

In that moment, together with the holy sentiment of gratitude, two other still more blessed strangers entered the hitherto callous heart of the completely subdued Jiacomo: he long struggled hard between emotion and weakness for the power of giving utterance to his feelings, and at length obtained it:—

"Take," said he, "this vile, this forfeit life, which you have preserved; for I am a *monster*, utterly unworthy to retain the precious gift; more especially when received at the hands of *one* whom I have so grossly, so recently injured."

This speech little surprised the compassionate butcher, who immediately concluded that the unfortunate utterer had become delirious from the agony of his wound; and, taking him up upon his brawny shoulders as

easily as he would have done a lamb or a kid, he carried the completely discomfited sharper to a little solitary osteria situate at the extremity of a chesnut-shaded hill, which gently sloped away about a quarter of a league from the scene of action; from whence, after depositing his burthen upon the best bed the house afforded, he immediately set forward to Pisa with the utmost speed which the momentum of his person permitted in search of a surgeon, with whom with equal good will, though unavoidably somewhat less celerity, he again returned.

Jiacomo's wound was by no means dangerous: skilful treatment, aided by proper regimen, undisturbed quiet, and careful nursing, produced, even in a few hours, a wonderful change for the best; so that when, after a long, calm, and undisturbed sleep, he still persisted in his self-accusations, the astounded butcher, who had never left his

side, could no longer refer to *delirium* the still utterly inexplicable confession and deprecation of the object of his humane assiduities.

To effectually substantiate his evidence, our penitent was, at last, obliged to *resume* and adopt the tones, terms, and gestures which he had used at his last interview with the too credulous *man of mutton;* and no sooner were those signs of power recurred to, than *Signior Ignatzio de Ingano, head Purveyor to his Most Serene Eminence Prince Garaguntua Carnivoro de Golozo, Ambassador to the Mighty Sultan of the beef-eating Hindoos,* stood, even without the aid of costume, confessed; and with eyes darting fire the rageful butcher lifted high his ponderous arm, in act to crush to atoms the puny but irritative insect whose gambols had annoyed his generous nature.

But transient, indeed, was the ebullition

of his wrath; his muscular arm dropped as lifeless to his side, the contraction of his glaring brow insensibly relaxed, while a mingled expression of pity and contempt stole over his candid features.

"*Live*, rascal!" murmured he, in a tremulous tone, as he hastily retreated towards the door: "*live*, to experience the worst of punishments—*shame* and *remorse!* You are witty, learned, and wise; but to you most truly, indeed, may the holy text which says that '*wisdom is sorrow*' be applied; since what purpose has your knowledge answered, save to first make you a *cheat*, and then render you more keenly sensible of your sin, disgrace, and shame?"

"O leave me not, I implore you," cried the wounded man. "My heart has become the slave of gratitude: your goodness, your services, have joined me to you by the chain of an everlasting attachment. Stretch not

then, thus painfully, its links, or with them, too, will break this swelling heart!"

"*Do you, can you,* deserve to be trusted?" enquired the half-returning and more than half-wavering butcher.

"No," replied Jiacomo, "I *do not*, but I *will;* and I feel that my *life*, my very *soul's life itself*, will *depend* upon your faith in the asseveration."

"*Then*," answered the butcher, quickly coming up to the bed-side, and stretching forth his hand rather than lose the chance of saving both, "cheat me again if you can."

"That I certainly shall," said the weeping supplicant, "by suddenly becoming honest."

"One would fancy from the figure you so lately cut," rejoined the butcher, "that you have never needed to be otherwise."

"Alas!" returned Jiacomo, with a deep sigh, "I am indeed, to the disgrace of my unfortunate family, well descended; I have

are the *devil* in disguise, after all; but if you will try to repeat the paternoster, and dip your hands in this porringer of holy water, I will endeavour to believe that you are but a mortal like myself; and that's a wider stretch of my faith than ever your puny-appetited master made of his jaws when he devoured half the contents of my well-furnished shop for a single luncheon."

The proselyte of gratitude (for such, indeed, Jiacomo truly was) cheerfully complied with the formula and lavation required; after which Buffalomanzo proposed to immediately remove him in a convenient carriage to his own house, where, after the cure of his wound was completed, he should, by way of making his own feelings more independent, assume the care of his accounts, and the duty of making out his bills, until somewhat more worthy of his talents and

from his extraordinary conduct, an
more extraordinary silence.

Fired with resentment, though sic
with suspicion and palsied by fe
doubting what extent of confidence th
creant might have reposed in his st
and new ally, they nevertheless hesitate
at pricking down Jiacomo's name in
book of vengeance; but what form thei
tended retribution should wear, or w
quarter be hurled from, remained und
mined, till, by completely evacuating
ruined palazzo, they had secured themse
against that detection, with the drea
which their minds were now perpetu
haunted and disturbed.

At length the appalled triumvirate s

hope of obtaining an early opportunity of paying his own wages from an old family strong box kept by the jolly Bonofacio's bedside, and so rich, as well as antient, as to be the talk of the country. Fabricio, with little other purpose than that of keeping the object of their revenge perpetually in view, contrived to become an attendant at an hospital, exactly opposite to the house of Buffalomanzo; while Salatro, mounting the garb of a French officer, took up his lodgings at the *Albergo Reale*, one of the most fashionable and best frequented houses of entertainment in the city, where was established a gaming table, by his practices at which he had little doubt but he should be enabled to discharge his reckoning.

Bonofacio, the frank and homely master of Reynardi, had an only child, a fair and amiable daughter, whose birth had made him for eighteen years a widower. Lillia

was lovely, but, utterly unconscious of loveliness, appeared in that very unconsciousness lovelier still: gentle even to humbleness, yet proudly virtuous; wise, witty, but utterly unassuming.

Reynardi no sooner saw and heard her (for she was absent from home, on a visit to an aunt who dwelt at Valombrosa, when he first came), than he felt as though he could have parted with his life to defend, rather than have risked one hair to defraud the inheritance of so fair, so excellent a creature. Soon after her return home, he had the happy chance of saving the innocent object of his devoted admiration from great and imminent peril, to which she was exposed by the assaults of an infuriated bull, which, seized with sudden madness, rushed headlong from his pasture, dealing injury and death to every object of his fatal fury: for this act the rejoicing Bonofacio assured him he should ever

"What!" would he mentally exclaim, in this frequent anguished self-communion, "shall Lillia, the lovely, the chaste, the unsuspecting Lillia, become the wedded partner of a vagrant sharper, a wandering pilferer—nay, the intended thief of her own generous parent's wealth? Shall her jointure be but care and sorrow; and the only inheritance of the innocent babes of her confiding bosom, shame? Dares a vain, vile, idle wasp, the pitiful purloiner of his neighbour's hive, aspire to bear the sacred names of husband, father? Perish the presumptuous, the impious wish! forbid it, honour, gratitude; but, *most* of all, forbid it *real love!* No! I will wander far away from this too bright, too dear temptation, and live by labour or die of grief, where my desiring eyes, at least, may sin no more."

Still lingering, though hopeless, love wrought new delays; and both Reynardi and Lillia pined in secret, and from the *same*

his father, who, though not as rich as himself, was pretty well to do in the world; and on him, as the most eligible person in his whole vicinity, did he fix for the purpose of raising the young stock in question. Now, to say the truth, Leonato's father, without any particular fancy for providing playthings for his dotage, had nevertheless been thinking that a match for his son with his rich neighbour's fair daughter would be one of the best improvements in their property which they had ever attempted: it is not, therefore, unnatural that Bonofacio's frank and liberal proposals would be met by him with suavity, and by his son, whose heart was completely disengaged, with warmth. But young folks, however amenable they may prove in more indifferent matters, are apt sometimes to turn out a little unmanageable in those of the *heart;* in the arrangements pertaining to which, justice, nature, or somewhat very like them, has almost univer-

sally put it into their green heads they have a right to be considered not as *seconds*, but *principals*. Not, indeed, that this spirit of insubordination appeared in the bridegroom elect, the young Leonato: he, on the contrary, breathed the very spirit of complacency, and had already began to plan some very notable improvements in Bonofacio's mulberry gardens and olive-grounds; but Lillia, upon the very first notification of the existing treaty, turned as pale as death, and, with one long and deep sigh, sank in a swoon at her father's feet, where she lay, for a time, as cold as marble, and seemingly equally inanimate.

The cries of the surprised and distressed parent soon brought all his servants and dependents about him: nor was Reynardi the last in the anxious train; he, stooping down, caught the insensate maiden to his bosom, and, rendered frantic, regardless of all forms by her supposed sudden demise, raved aloud

to Heaven and man of his hopeless love, his grief, and his despair.

Lillia awoke to life at the near accents of that beloved voice which alone spoke comfort to her melancholy soul; but her father, now little rejoicing at her revival, sternly reproached her for having rebelliously and clandestinely encouraged the presumptuous love of his hireling hind. "Does he then, indeed, avow his love?" cried the now no longer timid Lillia. "Now, then, I shall die content, *since he, and only he, is, or ever can be, the possessor of mine.*"

Bonofacio, the first ferment of his anger abated, readily admitted the young man's merits, and the greatness of their obligations to him, which he said he was ready and most willing to cancel by any gift within his means, short of his daughter.

"But for *him* you had had no daughter," said Lillia, "and all your other possessions

would then have been as unvaluable to you, as, without me, they would now prove to him: but since you guessed not the only guerdon he would prefer, why have you been thus tardy in selecting from your ample stores such recompense as you might deem acceptable? You possessed many modes of benefitting my preserver; your house, your orchards, your wide-extended fields, mulberry-gardens, olive-grounds, and vineyards; your stock, and your *gold*—each or all of these might have been called into requisition by gratitude: but *I*, in these my days of minorship and maidenhood, *I* had nought of my own to give, save my *heart*, and that *is* given, *unalterably given*, to the saver of my life."

Young Leonato and his father were both auditors of this scene, and seemed so little affected either by Lillia's distress, or the foregoing frank acknowledgment of a prior passion, as to propose that the priest should

be sent for, and the projected marriage immediately solemnized, as the most ready as well as effectual means of crushing for ever the rebellious buds of an unsanctioned love.

"But, hold ye yet awhile," cried old Bonofacio; "this is not altogether pretty in you, neighbours. Here's my daughter looking more like a shrouded corpse than a blushing bride; and instead of curing her ailment by cordials, you offer her poison. By my faith, neighbours—father and son—it seems as though you would take her without a head as well as lacking of a heart, rather than let the power of making improvements in my property go by."

The Leonatos, senior and junior, both slunk away very unceremoniously, and somewhat, to say the truth, out of countenance; while Bonofacio placed the little milk-white hand of Lillia in that of Reynardi; who,

shrinking from the proffered blessing, dropped to his feet, and, covering his face with both hands, sobbed out,—"No! never will I abuse your goodness. I am unworthy to look an honest man in the face, much less to receive such a gift from his hands! Never would I have revealed my ill-fated, presumptuous love, had I not believed its object dead, and hope with her extinct for ever."

"Blessed mistake!" exclaimed Lillia; "my fancied death has brought me life with love!"

Poor Reynardi! he was, indeed, sore beset—passion on one hand, and principle on the other, running him hard; but principle triumphed for a while, till Lillia grew ill, her cheeks lost their bloom, and her tender eyes their lustre; and Reynardi found that even the triumph of principle might be bought too dear. With the purpose, then, of endeavouring to eradicate the ill-placed preference

of his innocent and beautiful mistress, he endured the ordeal of confessing the hitherto guarded secret of his past nefarious course of life; nay, even the motive which originally led him to seek the service of Bonofacio itself at last stood revealed. The discovery was dreadful, and agonizing was the struggle which ensued in the mind of the upright farmer; but the listless step, the languid eye, the slight hectic cough of his Lillia, were all irresistible petitions for that remission which the culprit denied himself, and desired not to obtain from others. Insensibly both father as well as daughter learned to pity where, at first, they could but condemn; and after all the developments had been made, not one of the parties remained, at the twelvemonths' end, as adverse to the match as Reynardi himself.

We do not profess to explain by what precise and particular means he at last contrived

to overcome his conscientious scruples; but certain it is that the ensuing Easter beheld him the blessed and grateful husband of his adored Lillia, who speedily regained her health, bloom, and cheerfulness; and in two years presented as many rosy, smiling girls as playfellows to her expectant and much delighted father.

Soon after entering upon his new duties at the Hospital, as *Fabricio* was one morning employed in watering the court-yard, he observed an aged man wearily ascending the steps which led to the portico: presently he groaned aloud, tottered, and would have fallen headlong down them, but that Fabricio ran and caught him in his arms. The poor old man, who had not lost his senses, though, from fatigue and hunger, his strength had failed him, lifted up his heavy eyes with a glance of gratitude to his kind supporter, while those of Fabricio, rivetting themselves

upon the countenance of his venerable burthen, recognised his for many years deserted father! But the recognition was not mutual: Fabricio had grown from mere boyhood into the meridian of life; the artificial complexion and borrowed hair which he wore, moreover, aided most effectually to conceal his identity, which shame, as well as apprehension of the baneful effects which a too precipitate disclosure of himself might produce upon the spirits of his already exhausted parent, induced him to wish yet a little longer to conceal.

Having carefully seated his father upon a bench in the hall, he easily procured from the *Providitore* of the house some wine, bread, and other refreshments, which he eagerly pressed upon his acceptance; and, after partaking of these very needful comforts, and enjoying of an hour's rest, the senior was so well recovered of his accidental in-

disposition, as to be, as much by gratitude as the natural garrulity of age, easily led, by the artful insinuations of his unknown son, into a full disclosure of his past concerns, and the purpose of his present pilgrimage.

"I am, kind stranger," said the old man, "a native of the furthermost part of Calabria, and long, very long, it is since these old eyes have looked upon a small but pleasant farm there, which by birthright I inherited and enjoyed, and which, though it has long been basely and cruelly withheld from me, is still, in the course of justice, unquestionably my own: once I dwelt on it most cheerily, relishing my coarse and brown bread, because it was seasoned by toil, and sweetened by duty and by love! I had by my dear hapless wife, two fine and healthful children, a girl and boy, both born at a birth, and both dearer than their own twin orbs of sight to their doating parents; and

well, as they grew, did they merit our utmost love, our utmost care: fair, towardly creatures they were, as ever blessed with cherub smiles a parent's board. My family never received after their births any further increase; and, as my Fabricio grew up, he helped me mightily in my daily toils. Every thing went on easily and successfully: my daughter, my sweet Bettina, was in her department equally industrious and useful; she minded the dairy and apiary, in which my beloved partner took great interest and delight, with indefatigable care and attention; and when those duties were done, would cheerfully resume her distaff by her dear mother's side, and, ever still at our return from the field, smiling faces, a neat hearth, a well-stored cleanly board, and a joyous lay, were our welcome, our precious reward!"

The old man paused; heavy tears broke

from his eyes, and slowly trickled down his silvery beard: he smote his breast and deeply sighed, while nature, aided by remorse, levied the same sad tribute from the heart-smitten prodigal, who, silently walking aside, found it the most difficult feint he ever yet had practised, to, at last, return to his father with an unruffled countenance.

By this time the storm of regret had passed away from the senior, for it was unpolluted by remorse; a lingering tear, indeed, still hung upon his white-fringed lid: but the sunbeam of resignation, which now illumined his upturned eye, soon chased away the fugitive dew-drop of sorrow.

"Those comforts have all, indeed, departed," said he, meekly crossing his hands upon his breast: "even like the mists of morning are they gone. But God's will be done! He has yet left me integrity and patience; and could I but, ere I descend into

my grave, obtain tidings of my cruel but still much beloved boy, I think I could even *die content!*"

"Your son, then, is living?" said Fabricio, in a smothered voice.

"I hope so," replied the old man; "but alas! for more than these fifteen years he has been silent as the dead to me."

By this time the stated hour for performing some of the duties of his service arrived, and Fabricio was, therefore, most reluctantly compelled to tear himself, for the present, from his parent's side; but he did not do this till he had won a promise from the old man to accept of the hospitality of the house for a few days, in order to recruit his age, travel, and care-worn frame with needful rest: he soon returned, followed by the proper officer, to receive the old man's personal application for admission, which was no sooner made than accepted; and the senior, accom-

modated beneath the benevolent roof, received all due care, refreshment, and attention; while his heart-rent and already reclaimed son, who had, though still unknown, won largely on his affection, snatched every moment which he could win from the discharge of his menial offices to attend upon his unconscious and beloved parent with the most unremitting tenderness and devoted filial care. During the course of his stay at the hospital, the old man thus resumed the story of his woes:—

"My son was about fourteen years of age, when a band of *Zingannos**, whom the dangerous illness of their chief had detained upon our shores during the whole of the winter, began to be very troublesome by their too frequent visits to my farm: they came with pretence to beg, and were never denied, if it was but a measure of flour, a flask of oil,

* *Gypsies.*

or even a lapful of chesnuts. Still I never had suffered them, during their trouble in the inclement season, to go away empty, for almsdeeds are still rendered, by God's especial mercy, blessings to him that gives, far, far more precious than to him who receives: and it was not till I discovered that my son had grown too fond of the converse of those wise but wild wanderers that they suddenly became to me unwelcome guests. As for Fabricio, he would hang upon the breath of their witching lips, if unhindered by me, for hours; they would talk to him of the *stars*, the remote secrets of whose motions and laws their fathers had (as they vaunted), in their original soil of Egypt, first discovered and afterwards explained to the wondering and admiring earth; they would demonstrate their distances from this globe and each other, and seemed to scan with easy compass the politics of creation.

"My boy was quick of apprehension, acute, and untired in the seductive quest of knowledge: his natural talents and ready aptitude for learning I had caused to be cultivated by our good priest, who was excellently well skilled to discharge the appointed trust with credit both to himself and pupil; and my poor boy was already, among our simple circle, graced with the pleasing title of the best scholar in the hamlet, when these romantic ramblers fatally raised his researches above the clouds, where they also pretended to read his *destiny*, and bade him presume on one that would prove *illustrious*. Fatal prediction! Ominous delusion! From thenceforward he neglected his humble but more useful studies, and still more useful labours; his affections, too, diminished with his industry and his duty; and my commands, the persuasions of his mother, and the tears of his once darling sister, were alike disre-

garded. Petulance soon succeeded to sullenness and obstinacy, and insolence too soon to these: remonstrance and restraint both proved alike insufficient to reclaim him; and when health and the returning sun had sufficiently warmed into activity the nest of vipers which I had myself so materially aided to cherish, they took to the sea, and, with them, decoyed away the joy of my eyes, the hopes, the promise of my declining age, my beloved Fabricio; of whom, though sought with the most unremitting diligence of anxious, expensive, and personal enquiry, I have never since obtained the slightest or remotest tidings.

"For some weeks after the occurrence of this calamitous and mysterious event, my dear and worthy wife, the faithful partner of my toils, my joys, and sorrows, bore up better than I could have dared to expect: but the calm was but evanescent; soon alike

faded away the trust of patience and the more vivid illusions of hope, and her long-restrained solicitude and distress burst forth at once. The most frantic ravings succeeded to her tender tears and pious aspirations; a dreadful fever of the brain ensued, by which her life was imminently endangered, and from which she, at last, arose a confirmed, a hopeless lunatic. For more than a year I persisted in keeping her beneath my once happy roof, devoting to her service and attendance all my days and the greater portion of my nights; but her disorder almost hourly increased; her violence and fury became unbounded, dangerous, and unrestrainable. All she had most loved, she now, in consequence of a strange yet very common symptom of her fatal malady, most abhorred; and she perpetually threatened, nay sought, to take my life, and that of her once much-loved and most afflicted daughter. Disap-

pointed in those attempts, she repeatedly endeavoured to destroy herself; and, to preserve her life as well as our's, coercion and confinement became indispensable.

"The holy and excellent Lady Abbess of the Convent of St. Clare, near to which my rural abode was situated, at length prevailed on me to yield up the dear forlorn one to her care; and, with a reluctant and breaking heart, I at last submitted to the charitable, humane, and, in short, indispensable arrangement proposed: my hapless wife was accordingly carefully conveyed to the convent, where skilful, experienced, and constant medical attendance, regular and proper regimen, and the most profound quiet, together with the complete exclusion of every offensive object, were all united and resorted to, to effect a cure, or at least a palliation of the disease. But, alas! its hopeless inveteracy defied every salutary, every pious aid;

forget her. Her health gently, though but too perceptibly, declined; and I *vowed* a pilgrimage to *our holy Lady of Loretto* for the triple restoration of my erring son, my wife's reason, and my daughter's health. Soon after, I entrusted the care of my farm and the guardianship of my child to a married kinsman, and set forward to redeem my sacred pledge; but, alas! six months after, when I returned from my travel, and expected from my relative the refundment of my all, he totally refused the required restoration, and produced a *forged* instrument dated a few days prior to my departure, which set forth that I had, for the consideration of a certain sum therein alluded to as already received, formally made over and *sold* the whole of my patrimonial property to him and his heirs for ever: but what was infinitely more atrocious, he had, forgetting the ties of kindred, the sacred obligations of virtue and conjugal fidelity, and

dimpled cheek. Love, which finds or creates a paradise wherever it enters, had been the occasion of this happy change. The good widow was blessed with an only son, virtuous, industrious, gentle, and pious; he had welcomed the forlorn outcast with a brother's pity—that pity, soon as he proved my Bettina's kindred virtues, had learned to own a tenderer name; while the gratitude of my child had, as she confessed to me, experienced a similar and almost equally rapid transmutation: but both, though their loves were blesssed by *one* parent's full approval, had duteously awaited, ere they indulged them, the sanction of *another*. My case was one of some delicacy, and I failed not to represent to Erminio, that the child of his mother's friend was, at present, portionless, and but too likely to remain so: he answered but by showing to me his *hands*, young, strong, and nerved by early and healthful toil, and by

pointing to protective heaven, and then to his own faithful and generous heart; while on the other side his mother, with streaming eyes, besought me not to deny happiness to three imploring hearts, who could only derive the precious boon from my award.

"I looked upon my Bettina; *she* was my last remaining treasure: son, wife, and shelter were all lost to me for ever! But ought selfish motives to prevent my performing to that loved and last treasure a parent's duty? By the mere breath of my lips I could replace her truant brother with a life-long protector in a tender and virtuous husband; *another* mother, too, another home, might be her's if *I* but willed they *should* be so: and could a *father* longer hesitate? No! The mist of nature's weakness indeed rose involuntarily to my eyes; but I groped out the hands of my Bettina and her Erminio, *joined* them, and blessed the sacred compact: and though my

heart was a little sore at first, their pure and artless joy, and, still more, the consciousness of having done my duty, soon soothed its pain. The bridal quickly followed; my children and the gracious widow rejoiced exceedingly, and I endeavoured not to mar their mirth by unseasonable sadness. The festivity over, and my daughter comfortably settled, I considered it as a sacred obligation which I owed to my recreant and uncertain-fated son, but still more to my Bettina and her probable offspring, to litigate the possession of my farm with my unworthy kinsman: the attempt, however, though made with vigour, proved finally abortive: that wicked and artful man had effectually bribed to his interest the only lawyer the hamlet afforded; that very person had, indeed, been the conductor, though not the suggestor, of the whole scheme, and the skilful fabricator of the deceptious instrument, which it was to the

interest of his character, as well as the future advantage of his purse, most strenuously to uphold. Besides, I had neither money, credit, nor friends, to enable me to carry my case to seek for justice further off: all I could with prudence do, was, to enter a solemn and official protest against the nefarious and wicked proceeding, and, having seen this deposited in the custody of the proper authority, I once more prepared to turn my back upon my native place.

"My good friend the pious widow, indeed, and still more my equally affectionate children, earnestly besought me to unloose the latchets of travel, and set up my constant rest beneath their roof of unanimity and love, striving to forget that I had ever known or ruled another home: but it could not be! The wild phrenzied eye of my disconsolate wife seemed to shoot lightnings into my brain wherever I beheld it; yet to live near,

and not *see* her, was impossible; nor could I pass my rightful roof, and behold it withheld from me by the unjust detention of my own kinsman, without emotions, without repinings, which, vain as well as useless, rendered me perhaps the greater sinner of the two. Again, then, though with an heavy heart, I pronounced the cruel but necessary word, Farewell! and with the exception of two short visits to my daughter, who has been blest with a numerous progeny, have been for better than twelve years a wandering pilgrim over the earth; owing my bread to charity, but my resignation to God alone; now kneeling at the shrines of St. Geneviève and St. Louis in France—now numbering my beads on the brink of St. Winifred's well, or at the foot of St. Becket's tomb, in Britain: next behold me imploring mercies and relief for all I never can cease to love and to regret of St. James of Compostella in Spain;

upon his head, saying, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and you, and am no more worthy to be called your *son!*"

"My son!" exclaimed the old man, with a convulsive gasp; "*you* my son!" and fell faintingly backward. But life was preserved by incredulity, and he gradually again revived. "*You* are *not* my son," said he, in a faint but solemn voice; "your eyes, indeed—your action—the trick of your lips—nay, even the tones of your voice, (though much, *much* hoarser) are very like his, and I have thought so ere now: but, then, your *skin: his* was lily white; *your's* is, as the sunflower, tawny; *your hair*, too, is *raven black*, while my Fabricio's was fair almost as the shiny flax which his poor mother spun. *Age* cannot have occasioned so complete a change as *that*."

"But *art* can," replied Fabricio. He threw off the artificial covering of his flaxen locks,

and, running to some water which stood opportunely near, soon divested his countenance of its dusky tinge.

"Gracious God!" cried the old man, solemnly sinking on his knees, "thou hast, at last, heard and answered my prayers, my vows!—*Oh! my son—my son!*" He fell upon his neck, and wept!

Could a lingering doubt have yet disturbed the senior's belief of his identity, Fabricio's perfect knowledge of all their family concerns previously to his unhappy flight, and particular description of their house and lands, and the persons of his mother and sister, must have convinced incredulity itself: the old man needed no other conviction than that of his own eyes and heart.

"Ask me not of my past life, my dear father!" said Fabricio, during an after conversation (when both had become more composed and resigned to happiness): "all of life

that is past is black, foul, and fearful;—let its record rest in oblivion: but, listen to me, my parent—listen to me, my God! while I devote its residue, however limited, however extended, to repentance, to virtue, and to duty!" He bent at his father's feet, who heard, well pleased, the sacred promise, which angels hailed and omnipotence itself approved.

Fabricio's first resolution was, as soon as his father's health should be sufficiently re-established, to convey him to Calabria, and leave no human means untried or unattempted to redress his wrongs, and re-establish his declining age in his rightful home.

It had blown all night a strong and fearful tempest, when the friendly inhabitants of Fabricio's native sea-washed hamlet rushed with the first beams of morning in crowds down to the strand, to render what aid they could to the crew of a gallant vessel wrecked almost in sight of port: several of the sea-

drenched mariners had already claimed and received from them the services and the dues of hospitality and humanity; when a young man swimming with one arm, and with the other supporting a venerable old one, attracted and engaged all their notice, all their sympathy. *Twice* did his pious burthen drop beneath the waves, and *twice* did his preserver rescue its unresisting prey from the encroaching deep. Again the hoary head is whelmed; and yet once more, with strenuous, with difficult, and painful effort, is, by the heaven-sinnewed, heaven-blest arm of filial duty, again upraised. Fabricio lands his precious trust amidst the joyous, the approving acclaims of his admiring countrymen, and the *father* kneels to the *son* for life bestowed; but that son, falling to his venerated feet, kisses and bathes them with joyous tears, each more precious than the vaunted pearl of Egypt's wasteful queen: he raises his parent to his

willing shoulders, he bears him in triumph to his sister's palpitating bosom, and receives in that sacred moment the kiss of reunion, of forgiveness!

Death agonies were wringing, without mustering sufficient power to finally divorce from its long sickness-worn tenement, the guilty soul of the pilgrim's usurping kinsman, at the very moment when, amidst the loud acclaims of approving hearts, the most precious trophies of a conqueror's train, Fabricio, bearing his aged parent in his arms, passed unheedingly in his haste his paternal dwelling; and as the blessed procession moved on, even beneath his very lattice, the dying man was in the act of delivering into the charge of a more just and equitable legal adviser, who had succeeded in office his former nefarious counsellor, a properly attested deed which solemnly acknowledged his guilt, and restored the long alienated

property, considerably enriched by many valuable improvements, to its rightful owner. Childless, widowed, and racked by the torments of an agonizing and incurable internal disease, he had long contended with pride, remorse, and the dread of shame; but that of death, near and inevitable, had at last surmounted every inferior scruple, and, having made all the human atonement now possible, he ventured to think of futurity. Horrible still was the prospect; his deeds had wrung the heart, which, already surcharged with sorrow, had reposed in him trust, confidence, belief! How had he repaid the sacred deposit? The lorn husband, the bereaved father, his crime had aided to send forth a mourning beggar fugitive to other realms, to wander unsuccoured, and die unpitied and unknown. Fear, horror, and despair, were darting their iron fangs into his fast riving heart, when the loud and

reiterated cries, that the long truant Fabricio had, at last, returned to his native shores, bearing his shipwrecked and life-rescued father in his arms, rung sounds of celestial melody, celestial import, in his dulling ears.

"Is it, then, indeed true?" he piercingly exclaimed: "Fly, fly," he instantly added to his worthy lawyer, "and place, while yet I breathe, your trusted deposit in my wronged kinsman's hands, and say to the lovely Bettina that all my individual wealth has long been marked for her, for her and her's; say too to both, I conjure you, that I repent me—ah! how much! how truly!—Oh, gracious heaven! the thick darkness rolls away—the prospect brightens into glory. I can *now* die; and I die, too, in *hope*."

For the last two months which preceded the return of her husband and her son, the long furious madness of the hapless maternal martyr had subsided into a calm and

gentle melancholy: a few weeks after their arrival she became subject to long fits of intense musing, from which she would, at last, start as from a troubled dream, and presently again relapse into incoherence, brightened, however, by strong though transient gleams of recollection.

During one of those evanescent visits of memory, her assiduous, and ever-devoted and attentive daughter, who, however, from the reasons before explained, seldom ventured into her presence, caused to be presented to her a nosegay of fresh thyme and wall-flowers: she immediately enquired of her attendant whether the bees had yet swarmed, and if Bettina was as attentive to them as usual. That rejoicing but strangely trembling Bettina was now the happy parent of a numerous family, the eldest of which, a daughter, her namesake, and the

very prototype of herself at the same years, she caused to be introduced in her character to her grandmother, who started at the sight of her, and still more at the sound of her voice. Presently she ran, and, catching her in her arms, strained her to her bosom, and, mournfully complaining of her long absence, kissed her forehead, and, for the first time for fifteen years, *wept*. A fit of musing succeeded, after which she shook her head, and put her gently away. The tender girl, hysterically sobbing, clung to her knees. Softened, but not convinced, her grandmother, stooping, bent upon her face a stedfast gaze, as it was supposed in search of a small scar which was situated near her daughter's left temple: dissatisfied with the result of her scrutiny, she waved her hand mournfully, saying, "Go, fair maiden! go in peace! You indeed resemble my Bettina; but, alas!

you are not her!" From this moment the medical assistants declared the recovery of her intellects certain and near.

Salatro, the last of our adventurers, lodged, as we have before related, at the *Albergo Reale*, where was established a gaming table, at which he was a frequent guest, and where, on one particular evening, he contrived, by means of dice most artfully loaded, to pick up a very considerable amount of cash. Disappointment and adversity sometimes dulls, but much oftener is observed to sharpen, the perceptions and intellects of their victims: the latter of those effects were produced upon the losers of that evening, who, after a short consultation among themselves, prepared to saw asunder the deceitful dice which had proved to them so undeviatingly uncivil. Flustered by wine and success, and unnerved by apprehension, Salatro failed of his accustomed adroitness in instantaneously se-

creting the subjects of suspicion and substituting others of an unexceptionable character in their stead, and detection became inevitable. After undergoing a succession of the most insulting invectives and affrontive and repulsive indignities, he was, as the discovery happened at the very dead of night, conveyed up stairs, and imprisoned in a strong upper apartment of the Albergo, formerly used as a store-room, but now nearly empty, until the civil power could be conveniently aroused to take him into custody.

Salatro inherited from nature fine and quick sense, but his temper was sour, harsh, and unbending; and this cast of character it was which had rendered him completely inaccessible to the remonstrances and entreaties of the three friends of reform, who had all, previously to Fabricio's embarkation for Calabria with his father, found each other out, and all collectively, and also each

individually, strenuously essayed to disentangle their deserted and devoted, but much pitied companion from the dangerous meshes of his evil ways. Vain were their earnest and pious essays; and with grieving and reluctant hearts they were, at length, compelled to relinquish a work far beyond their puny though well-intentioned efforts to accomplish: yet was there a strong leven of tenderness hid within the very inmost core of Salatro's rugged-coated heart, which, while it keenly regretted the severation of his three companions from his own now desolated fortunes, ardently rejoiced in their much amended temporal prospects; for as to the soul's interests in those of eternity, he but slightly believed in, and less regarded them; to live to use, to enjoy to the utmost the powers and the goods of life, to die and to sleep for ever, was, he endeavoured to persuade himself, the brutish and limited purpose of *man*, the *image*

of his *Maker's* creation. Human beings are, in general, but too apt on all occasions to believe what they most wish, and Salatro's late course of conduct naturally produced in him a still stronger aptitude to embrace with eagerness the soothing doctrines of those self-deceivers who flatter their equally and fatally erring disciples that no after reckoning shall chastise the guilty past.

Salatro's education had been not only refined, but religious; and there *were* periods, and those too of *frequent* occurrence, when the momentary suggestions of conscience and of reason would dispel the artful sophistry, the laboured illusions of years. "If," he would commune with himself, "there *is* no hereafter, whence the nameless dread, the inexpressible remorse, attending on the commission of crime? If crime is not to be *finally* punished, because it is an irresistible impulse, an unavoidable attribute of our very natures,

what, then, is remorse? Why, to what end, am I tortured with the most agonizing of all mental sensations and emotions for an indifferent, nay, an unavoidable act? No! there *can* be no effect without a cause; and fear, compunction, *are, must be* the heaven-delegated guards of the soul, which, even while yet imprisoned in its fleshly case of mundane probation, sits, by instinctive impulse, in judgment upon those acts of its frail and temporary partner which are like to militate against the felicity of its own eternal being."

Often thus self-convinced, still would the proud and dark-minded reasoner, instead of seeking comfort in repentance, prefer the black refuge of despair, amidst whose foul glooms scepticism once more dared to risk the exhibition of her illusive phantasmagoria, mocking the semblance of truth by those ghastly shadows. Providence, the watchful, the wise, the merciful, the unerring

guard of man, was represented as a strong, a powerful, but a careless, unfeeling parent, who, having called a numerous progeny into existence, leaves them unguarded to wander amidst briers or roses, poisons or antidotes; to sport with doves, or be sported with by lions; and to sleep, as it may chance, beneath the deadly upas, or the tree of health: those dark and malign opinions were strong upon him during the eventful night of his confinement; for, to add to the accustomed burthen of his morbid and hopeless reflections, he was besides discovered, derided, and disgraced: severe and inevitable legal punishment, too, nearly awaited him; and even in the highly improbable event of his effecting his escape from the menaced danger, abandoned by the powerful assistance of his former associates, it seemed as though three-fourths of his life's best hopes and powers were already yielded up. Thus weak-

ened, thus despoiled, was it likely he could long battle against an incensed, a detection-wakened world, in which no prospect fairer than the galleys awaited him, from which the bloody cross or torturous wheel would, at last, but too probably finally divorce him?

It is not wonderful, that, with a mind thus constituted and reasonings so fearful, Salatro should constantly carry about his person the secret means of sudden self-destruction. Of his keen stiletto and regimental sword, as well as of his ill-acquired winnings, he had, indeed, been despoiled by the eager search of his incarcerators; but a very small leathern bag, containing a mortal poison, had escaped their scrutiny. His prison-room was provided with a pitcher of water and a cup, in which, soon as the first ruddy streaks of morning began to illumine the horizon, he mixed up his *last beverage*, and, approaching the narrow but open window

of his prison, which, from its great altitude, his goalers had deemed it unnecessary to secure, glanced upon the friendly and newly unveiled face of nature a malign and ferocious farewell, exclaiming, "Now, blind accident and mundane malice, I at least enjoy the power, the pride of defying and of defeating you!" As he spoke, he raised with an unshrinking arm the cup towards his thirsty lip, when a fugitive lory, newly escaped from its cage, and chased by a hawk, dashed with palpitating wing the draught of death from his hand, and sought shelter and protection from its pursuer in his bosom.

Soon harshly expelling his winged preserver, the abashed and disappointed suicide aroused from the temporary torpor into which he had sunk, and for the hundredth time examined the possibilities of escape. Despair, unqualified despair, only was the bitter fruit which the scrutiny produced.

The door was of impassable strength, formed of oak, thickly studded all over with large nails, and secured by a massive lock; the window was indeed open, but owed that complete neglect to its position, being situated in the fifth story of a building of castle-like altitude: above, was yet another tier of masonry, but the windows of the chambers it contained opened on a different side of the house; beneath, belonging to a lattice in the second tier from the basement, appeared, indeed, a rude kind of balcony, formed of one large and massive stone, supported only by two iron brackets fixed in the wall of the house: but to reach this narrow and distant landing place with life, unaided by any means to secure and facilitate the descent, was unattemptable: nature shrunk from a hopeless leap, the degree of suffering resulting from which, as well as the period of its duration, was unascertainable.

Once again his wildly rolling eyes made the circuit of his nearly dismantled prison-room, when they rested on an old packing case, in one corner, on which was written "*From Palermo.*" With his feet he presently crushed in the lid: it was filled with the stout and rich, but undyed, undressed, labours of the loom; and deliverance was no longer hopeless.

Salatro selected four pieces of the silk, two of which he secured to his waist by means of his officer's sash; then, unrolling the remaining two, he fastened them one on each side of the narrow casement: this he was easily enabled to effect, by means of an iron rod which passed across the lower part of the window; then, seating himself on the casement, he grasped one silken supporter in each hand, and by means of this new, secure, and costly ladder, descended to the seemingly air-suspended balcony with ease and

safety. Having once gained this much-desired landing place, he lost no time in applying the two other pieces of silk with which he was loaded to the iron brackets or staunchions by which it was alone upheld, and, once more trusting his person to their friendly support, he quickly found himself unhurt, alone, and unobserved, in the yard of the Albergo! Near the stable, stood a fresh mule, ready caparisoned, across whose flanks was thrown a horseman's coat: in this he quickly disguised himself, and, mounting the animal, swiftly galloped from the yard through an open door into the fields.

Distracted by the dread of pursuit, our palpitating and once more enfranchised adventurer pursued his headlong course, with scarcely a thought of reaching any certain point of destination: to leave Pisa at a distance was all his present purpose. In the course of the morning he procured some

curds from a shepherd, whose little temporary cabin stood near the road side; these refreshed him exceedingly, and, while he in haste partook of this seasonable refreshment, the simple and hospitable swain readily and cheerfully supplied the salutary relief of water and herbage to his panting beast.

Refreshed and invigorated, Salatro now remounted, pursuing his way with exceeding swiftness for a considerable time; but when the sun had gained his meridian throne, the strength of the fugitive and that of his beast also failed so entirely, that, much against his inclination, he was compelled to put up at a small and obscure *osteria*, to which the friendly shepherd had directed him. There, not without experiencing much dread and restlessness of mind, he was obliged to wear away as he could the intolerable heat of the day; and no sooner had it in some degree abated, than he again impatiently commenced

his undestined journey at a very swift pace, his disorder of spirits being much augmented by the attentive and suspicious glances of a party of horsemen, who happened to arrive at the *osteria* at the very moment of his departure from it.

After riding about two leagues in a direct line from the *osteria*, he deemed it a prudential mode of foiling pursuit to suddenly strike into a very thick wood, which appeared on his right hand; resolving, as the nights were short and intolerably sultry, to proceed no further, but pass his where he was.

As he secured the mule to a tree, some large and heavy drops of rain began to patter upon the leafy canopy above him: the birds flew low and swiftly to the shelter of their umbrageous tenements, and our adventurer, a sharer with them in the domicile of nature, took refuge beneath an old and mighty chesnut tree, whose spreading branches, thick as they grew,

not entirely excluding the moisture which now fell strong and incessantly, he unbuttoned the huge wrapping coat which he wore, in order to protect with it his head also. While thus engaged, he first felt somewhat hard in the breast pocket of it, which proved, upon examination, to be a small but very fine poignard of damasked steel.

The eyes of Salatro sparkled with joy as he surveyed this instrument of ready destruction, on which he bestowed the warm welcome of an unexpected friend. "This," (thought he, as with exultation he tried its excellent temper and exceeding keenness) "this, indeed, proves (if proof of it *were wanting)* that from the cradles of mortals, even unto their graves, blind and wreckless chance alone decides their lots. Now saved by a hair-breadth space from the brunt of a cannon-ball—to be killed, perhaps, the next hour, while revelling at the festal board, by

a mushroom. But a few short hours since, the terror of an insignificant bird saved me from suicide, and still later, the labours of a little worm from punishment, from *shame*: '*Live and repent*' would preach both moralist and religionist; but view this shining present, this quick and ready passport to death, and defend the doctrine of a protective power, ye who can!"

A near rustling amidst the branches at this moment most unpleasantly disturbed his ruminations, and his blood seemed to congeal round and ice-bind his heart as he heard some one whisper, "'Tis most likely he is hereabouts, but we must take the desperado by surprise, or our lives may pay the forfeit of our daring."—"Hush! hush!" answered a second voice, in a lower and still more smothered tone; "this way! Let us *first* search the ruined woodman's hut which lies to the right; 'tis most probable the villain knows the spot

as well as we do, and has sought within it shelter for the night. If we do not find him there, we will regularly beat the wood for him. I know every inch of it." The rustling was now renewed, but it grew fainter every moment; the footsteps also seemed to die away in distance, and Salatro breathed once more.

Instantaneously mounting the mule, he galloped through the wood in a contrary direction to that which his ear had informed him had been chosen by the pursuers, and faint, flurried, breathless with fatigue, and drenched by perspiration, soon left it far behind him.

Salatro entered upon a narrow ascending road, just about sunset, whose brilliant parting tints (for the weather had partially cleared up) were succeeded by an evening of terrors. Incessant vivid lightnings darted from the murky clouds, while, unattended by a single drop of rain, the winds and thunders howled

in fearful concert, unlike the customed mild regency of a summer twilight, thick darkness had suddenly succeeded the blaze of day, only fitfully and fearfully made visible, as it were, by long and streaming flames of electric fire.

Salatro unsparingly applied both whip and spur to the galled sides of the foamy beast, who still continued to bear him through darkness and the horrors of the conflicting elements with almost wind-like swiftness, when suddenly she stopped short, and remained immoveable. Vain alike were coercion or caress: with nostrils distended, bristling mane, and convulsive heaving chest, she remained passive to the piercing spur and smarting lash which deluged her reeking, lacerated sides with blood. With curses, the rage frantic Salatro at length dismounted, determined to leave the obstinate animal to its fate, and pursue his way as he might on

foot; but, ere he had taken one step forward, a blazing flash of lightning discovered to him that he stood on the uttermost brink of an abrupt and tremendous precipice! By an involuntary impulse he dropped upon his knees: his pallid face, bathed in the cold dew of horrible surprise, rested against the gory side of the tortured creature, whose instinct had been graciously permitted to prove the agent of his preservation: but his trembling hands were extended, and the thoughts of his disordered soul raised in a rush of wild and incoherent thanksgiving to the throne of his Saviour and his God!

The fearful but holy pause which ensued was soon broken by the quick trampling of horses; it drew nearer, and still nearer; and the cries of "Follow! follow!" repeated by different voices as in hot pursuit, were now distinctly heard. Salatro started to his feet, while fear and rage once more resumed their

so lately vacated places in his thick beating heart, and phrensied scepticism again established her despot sway in his disturbed and burning brain.

"What!" cried he, in fury, "have I meanly deserted the cause of truth, of reason, of *necessity*, and idly worshipped that *omnipresence* which exists not, save in the dreams of selfish dotards, who deem the care of their worthless atomies its sole and incessant charge? Had my life been, *indeed*, the ward of *Providence*, would it have been *three* times almost miraculously preserved, only that its wretched owner should be, at length, delivered up to a shame, from which he must *still* resort to *suicide* as a *last* defence?"

The horsemen were now nearly upon him: he felt for the poignard, and, furiously brandishing it amid the murky gloom, exclaimed, "No, tyrant prejudice! I will yet, dying even as I still have lived, deny thy legends and

defy their sway! That *chance*, which alone I have ever *truly* worshipped, still furnishes me with the means of ready relief; and now, if Providence even *is*, it *shall not save me*, if it would!"

He directed the instrument of destruction toward his heart: a heavy peal of thunder burst from and seemed to crack the black heaven from which it proceeded, which rifting, in various directions, looked all on fire. Blue lightnings scintillated around, and played upon the glittering blade of suicide; and, one wavy flash darting along the uplifted steel, it dropped, a bent, discoloured, and malleable substance, to the ground!

With tenfold fury fiercely raged the storm, and the terrified beast, springing from the side of her fallen rider, tore wildly back the path she had so lately past, and was with much difficulty caught by the astounded horsemen, who, huddled together in awful suspense, shrunk from the discharge of mun-

dane duties amidst an ethereal conflict so tremendously appalling; and, inferring that the rider of the gasping animal had either leaped the precipice to avoid detection, or been killed by the lightning, they tremblingly returned to their inn, to await the remission of the storm, ere they proceeded to investigate the truth of their conjectures.

With the first blush of new-born day came comfort, and repose, and hope; the thunder, murmuring still fainter and fainter as it fled, retreated before the herald beams of nature's glorious Protector, Cherisher, and Friend: the boisterous winds, wearied of their stormy toils, sunk to rest at the balmy breath of their infant brother zephyr; while a cool and pearly rain distilled upon the fevered and fretted earth, purifying, as it descended, the vexed and almost ignited air, and diffusing freshness, verdure, and alacrity around.

And now the early aroused pursuers of the preceding evening hastened to finish their

THE JEW

A Fragment.

eventful search: with strong feelings of anxiety they reached the scene of Salatro's last crime. *Prone, scathed, discoloured, struck senseless by the bolt of heaven,* and *lying on the precipice's extremest brink,* was he found! The persons who discovered him were a party of the *Sbirii** in pursuit of an old and notorious criminal, who had lately committed sacrilege by robbing a conventual church of a quantity of its sacerdotal plate.

Furnished with an accurate written description of the criminal's person, they at once perceived they had been misled by the accounts of those who had directed them to track Salatro, and who were, in fact, the very horsemen, whose earnest observation, just upon quitting the little *osteria,* on the preceding day, had so much alarmed him. The bare mention of an hasty and suspicious-looking traveller, gloomy, anxious, and wrapped and envelopped in an immense sur-

* The police, or officers of justice.

tout in the height of summer, was quite sufficient to give the watch-word of pursuit; and as their haste had not permitted them to compare notes with their informers respecting the features, complexion, and stature of the suspected party, the mistake remained unexplained, till they obtained ample time and opportunity, by a deliberate examination of the apparently lifeless creature before them, to recant their error.

Perceiving that the body was still warm, they carefully and tenderly raised and conveyed it to the neighbouring Monastery of St. Alexis, where, skilful medical assistance being readily obtained, the patient was speedily restored to sense, and, in a few days, to speech and complete convalescence.

The first words which Salatro uttered, on the recovery of his suspended articulation, were humble and fervent acknowledgments of the long-enduring, all-sustaining, and especial care of his merciful Creator; after

which he expressed an earnest desire to be permitted to become a member of the holy and charitable community he was among, which, after a free and full confession of the deeds and opinions of his past sinful life, was acceded to by the Superior, provided that he should, after a three years' probation, retain the same desire to assume the cowl which at present possessed him. These reasonable and mild conditions were gratefully and eagerly accepted by the sincerely repentant sinner, as infinitely easier than he deserved, or could have dared to hope for: his period of trial proved one of high edification to all around him; and, at its termination, he brought to the holy altar, to the service of which he joyfully pledged the ministry of his future wondrously ransomed life, a heart not broken by severity, but melted by mercy. The singular and repeated interpositions of Providence to save both his life and soul, had, at length, wrought an

entire change in his very nature: no longer petulant, gloomy, and morose, he looked on and partook of the exalted attributes and gracious gifts of his benign Maker not only with gratitude, but with joy; still striving and studying, even in the most trivial action of his now harmless and uniform existence, to humbly promote good, and earnestly eschew evil.

The glad tidings of his repentance were precious to the knowledge of his three reclaimed and anxious associates; and the much offending but highly favoured brother, Salatro, long lived a healthy monument of the power and the protection of Omnipotence, of sincere contrition, chereful picty, and humble hope.

We have now left the happy Salatro as securely moored in the harbour of content and peace, as it is possible for the frail, perishable human vessel, freighted with the trusted treasure of immortality, to hope to be, ere it

arrives at its destined mystic and eternal port. The fortunes of his three companions, two of which, however, remained nearly as calmly *immobile* as his own, we shall, ere we take our final leave of our readers, proceed to recount.

When Jiacomo had resided nearly a twelvemonth beneath the roof of the worthy butcher, having, during the whole of that period, continued to discharge the duties and the trust reposed in him with the most conscientious and heart-interested integrity, it so happened and fell out, that, as the time for celebrating the antient Festival of the *Giuochi del Ponte** drew near, the Grand Duke conceived a fancy and inclination to illuminate and indulge his good and loyal city of Pisa with the light of his presence on the occasion. Of this benign and honouring purpose the exulting and delighted Pisaynians

* A mock battle, fought on the Marble Bridge, between the two divisions of St. Mary and St. Anthony.

had due and early intimation, and were accordingly exceedingly alert and industrious in preparing the most sumptuous reception for their equally beloved as illustrious guest; and masques, fêtes, trophies, triumphs, and processions, were got up, prepared, and arranged, in the most brilliant style and rapid succession. All the different orders and degrees of the people, from the loftiest stock of nobility down to the lowest plebeian, were busied in constructing and framing among themselves addresses of welcome congratulation, loyalty, gratitude, and love: every class of trade, too, was emulous best to express its affection and regard: and Buffalomanzo, who had, by this time, become a man of some weight and consideration in the butchers' company, having often boasted, and that not without reason, of the learning, good sense, taste, wit, and eloquence, of his accomptant, these good people unanimously requested that he would use his

interest with his highly gifted scribe for the composition of a loyal address to be presented on the expected visit of their royal master.

Not without much earnest persuasion on the part of his highly-esteemed host, was this request complied with by the timid, melancholy, and diffident Jiacomo: at length he yielded to the united wishes of his good-natured host, and the respectable body of which he was the voice; and in a few hours produced a poetic effusion, which obtained not only the warm approval of the company in whose behalf it had originated, but also the unqualified praises and applause of the whole city.

The much desired sun destined to light the auspicious visit of their sovereign at last arose, as if decked also for the ceremony, in fresh and added glories; and the numerous addresses and gratulations presented by the thronging inhabitants were received by the mild and munificent Prince to whom they

were offered with an urbanity and expression of paternal affection, that endeared him even more than ever (if that were possible) to their grateful hearts. After expressing the warmest sense of gratification at his very marked reception among them, he bestowed upon the joy-transported Pisaynians several additional and important privileges and immunities; and, to crown the felicity of the loyal and valorous butcher, who played a very distinguished and earnest part among the mimic combatants, the division of St. Anthony (to which he belonged) were destined, on that memorable occasion, to become the victors of the redoubtable warriors of St. Mary; and that, too, under the very eye, and amidst the repeated *vivas*, of their august sovereign himself.

After a stay of some days, the Grand Duke prepared to leave Pisa, well pleased with the remembrance of its loyalty and love, and

still more with the graceful way in which, in general, those feelings had been expressed; but more especially the sentiments, the design, and the versification of the address received from the *butchers'* company fascinated his approval, and he commanded that the name and state of its author should be made known to him immediately, in order that, for a composition so classically elegant, yet naturally eloquent, the *bard* might taste of his royal *bounty*, and, what was infinitely more precious, his royal *praise*. Any stranger, who had witnessed the proud, the boundless triumph of Pietro Buffalomanzo at this event, would have supposed that the deserved distinction about to be bestowed upon his accomptant was likely to lead to his own elevation to the second honors of the realm at least. Spite of every evasion, every scruple, which modesty could invent or reluctance urge, he persisted, and

at last succeeded in leading the blushing bard to the feet of his intelligent and delighted prince. On this occasion the Duke honoured Jiacomo with a long private audience; and was so charmed, during the conversation, with his prose as well as verse, that he not only bestowed upon him a much more splendid donation than he had intended, but also went so far in his prepossession as to offer him a service immediately about his own person.

This high, and, as he conceived, undeserved mark of confidence and honour, the sincere penitent (strange as it may appear) had the principle as well as courage gratefully, but at the same time most preremptorily, to decline; and more strange still, the Duke was not offended at this very uncustomary rejection of royal favor: on the contrary, he praised his forbearance, and liked him not the less for his fortitude, and, being a prince of great good sense and profound pe-

netration into the minds and motives of men, he soon ascertained, from the tenor of the melancholy poet's discourse, that the means of a respectable and perhaps perpetual emigration from his native land would be a much more acceptable favor than even the post of Prime Minister itself at home; and, being decided in the determination of drawing so much eloquence and genius from a situation so uncongenial to and depressive of its powers, he offered to nominate the butcher's accomptant to the post of Under Secretary to an Embassy which he was preparing to send forthwith to the Court of France.

Shame-struck, broken-spirited, and coveting exile as the only means of cure for a wounded spirit, Jiacomo, it must be owned, with but an ill grace declined this second offer, so congenial to his wishes; yet much did he still regret the parting with his worthy patron, the valorous butcher. But that gene-

rous and true friend no sooner discovered the struggle of his mind, than, with the pure and heaven-instructed policy of a good and unvitiated heart, he gave Jiacomo to understand that the care of his own interests and happiness, in which *he* (Buffalomanzo) took so deep and devoted a concern, must henceforth be the sole pledge of his friendship and his gratitude. Thus adjured, our adventurer, with a heavy heart, as still distrusting his own self-command, accepted the re-offered favor of his munificent sovereign, and, after taking a most affectionate farewell of his generous friend, sailed with the gallant and glorious embassy of the Grand Duke; and, soon and safely arriving in the kingdom of France, ascended (by entering upon the duties of his office) once more the dangerous and dreaded stage of that world, on which he was, nevertheless, destined to yet perform a prominent and admired part.

His great and general talents for official business, the graces of his address, diction, and eloquence, and, above all, the sincerity and propriety of his conduct and deportment in his new office, first attracted the notice and finally secured to him the esteem of the French King, who, learning that the ingenious and pensive Secretary had a permission from his own royal master for as long extended a foreign residence as he himself should desire, he proceeded to sound him as to the state of his inclinations in regard to settling in France entirely, and, finding them consonant to his own wishes, he lost no time in gratifying the strong predilection he had conceived, by begging Jiacomo, through the medium of the Italian Ambassador of the Grand Duke, who easily yielded a consent which he rightly judged would prove the most acceptable favor he could render to the object of at once his admiration and his pity.

Soon after, the French Monarch bestowed upon Jiacomo a very distinguished and profitable office in one of the civil departments of the state, in which he presided with a judgment, prudence, and integrity, which honoured the post he filled as much as his nomination to it credited the selection of royalty—still maintaining a friendly and frequent correspondence with his first benefactor, Buffalomanzo. Jiacomo, by his means, rendered anonymous but ample reparation to as many of the sufferers by his and his three companions' former mal-practices as could possibly be traced out; and, in order to make some attempt at atonement to heaven for such parts of their nefarious conduct as time and the chances of mortality had rendered otherwise unrecompensible, remitted, in the course of a few years, in the same quiet unostentatious way, a handsome sum, to be divided between two charitable foundations in Rome, his native city. Those positive

and important duties performed, he breathed, with his repentant sighs and sincere aspirations for her happiness, a long and last adieu to the country of his birth; and continued to flourish, where he had set up his final rest, one of the brightest geniuses which at that period gemmed the Court of France.

It would prove a difficult if not an impossible task, even to the most vivid or Utopian imagination, to pourtray a happier knot of united hearts than those of Reynardi, his lovely Lillia, and their sweet children, of which that of the good Bonofacio formed the reverenced and conservated centre: they all dwelt together in peace, prosperity, and well doing; Reynardi being universally esteemed one of the best husbands, sons, fathers, masters, neighbours, subjects, and, to sum up all, Christians, in the whole dukedom of Tuscany.

One hasty glance at our Calabrian connexions, and we have done. The prediction of the medical attendants of Fabricio's unhappy

mother were soon verified. Reason, man's divine distinction and the pledge of his immortality, was indeed slowly but certainly returning.

The following summer smilingly beheld the re-united family comfortably established in their native home. The tender mother, completely restored to placid and thankful sanity, again seated with her much-loved husband beneath their own jasmine-twined porch, once more twirled her long neglected distaff; while the youngest of her dear daughter's children, a cherub boy, silently playing at her feet, presented to her, from a pannier overflowing with the treasures of Flora, nosegays of young fresh flowers, only less fair, less blooming than himself. The glistening eyes of the good old man would sometimes, for a moment, truantize from the pious homily which he was perusing, to worship, with upturned gaze and intellectual homage,

the great and gracious Giver of Blessings so various, so precious, so unhoped for!

Fabricio, the duteous Fabricio, most proudly blessed in his lowly lot, brought to their plain but plenteous board an offering of savoury herbs and rich fruits, the results of his own unwearied industry. The affectionate Bettina, borrowing a little time from maternal cares, to bestow it on equally loved, equally welcome filial ones, busied herself in arranging, with the hand of order and neatness, her mother's well-replenished clothes-press; while the darling of all, *Bettina the second*, whose look was mirth and whose voice was melody, carolled, as she tended the bees, a joyous lay.

END OF VOL. I.

J. Denne, Printer, Margate.

TALES;

Mournful, Mirthful, and Marvellous.

BY

MRS. WILMOT WELLS,

OF MARGATE.

"I deprecate the cruel critic's stab."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

London:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER ROW;

AND J. DENNE, MARGATE.

1827.

THE JEW;

A Fragment.

The Jew;

A FRAGMENT.

Ask you the mightiest pang man's heart may prove?
It's mightiest pang, be sure, is hopeless love.

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* * * * * * * *

MRS. Gordon's furious impatience to reach the native land of her recreant husband had hitherto prevented her from observing, or at all events from attempting to alleviate the indisposition of her devoted young companion: she at length very reluctantly directed the driver to pause at the entrance of a little mean inn by the road side, into the sanded parlour of which herself and Ugenia were most obsequiously bowed and curtsied by the attendant host and hostess.

Regret, anxiety, and alarm for the fate of her old but imprudent friend, had all combined with the unaccustomed and excessive fatigue to which she had lately been subjected, to disorder the delicate system of Ugenia, who, a recent bride, divided from a loved husband's attentions at an early stage of the most interesting of all female conditions, was, most unfortunately for her comfort and her safety, intimately associated with a selfish passion-dominioned being, ungratefully regardless of either. A cool free air, and the welcome cessation of the uneasy, harassing motion of the rickety postchaise, produced, however, an almost immediate change for the better; and, after a few moments' rest, the much relieved young matron, whose heart was humanity's proper throne, walked forth into the stable, for the purpose of *bribing* for the miserable wearied hacks which had brought them thither a larger portion of its offices and its

comforts than would most probably have otherwise fallen to their share.

"And how are you now, Mrs. Leslie? Ready, I hope, to proceed, are you not?" was the double interrogatory welcome of her return to the sanded parlour. The increased paleness of Mrs. Leslie's beautiful countenance afforded a silent but unfavorable contradiction to her words, which were, "I am ready to quit this dreadful place immediately;" and scarcely were they pronounced, when she fainted.

Successive swoonings rapidly succeeded her recovery from the first attack: medical aid was resorted to; and the professional gentleman who attended give it as his decided opinion, that rest and quiet, the most complete and profound, were absolutely necessary to secure not only the well-doing of the patient's incipient offspring but also her own life itself. Notwithstanding this alarming

and positive denunciation, the generous Ugenia would have persisted in accompanying her much afflicted companion, but extreme and overpowering bodily malady soon effectually enlisted itself on the side of her stay; and Mrs. Gordon, after sacrificing, with much reluctance, a few hours to her sick bed-side, unremorsefully remounted her vehicle, and continued her desperate journey alone.

In a few hours the fair Ugenia became completely delirious, and the rude, barbarous chambermaid of the inn seized that favourable opportunity of first inspecting, and then appropriating to her own use, the valuable contents of the sufferer's pockets, consisting of a rich gold watch, an etui of the same metal, and a purse very well filled beside. Meanwhile the landlady, perceiving the rapid increase of illness to her helpless and now utterly unconscious guest, thought it but com-

monly prudent to enquire how far that guest's pecuniary ostensibility might warrant and indemnify her for exercising towards her the duties of hospitality and humanity: but the close-gleaning Margery had left only a little loose silver to reward the research of her disappointed principal; and, but for the kinder and less interested conduct of the landlord, neglect and deprivation would, most probably, have added to the sufferings and increased the peril of the unfortunate Ugenia.

The landlady, in no very tolerant terms, bewailed herself, while her gentler and more generous helpmate vainly endeavoured to pacify and re-assure her. "Who, I ask you, is to pay us for the expenses of a dangerous and long illness beneath our roof?" vociferated she. "The old woman who arrived here with her is gone on, by her own confession, to the farthermost part of Scotland,

and was, I am bodily certain, raving mad beside."

"What matter of that?" interrupted the husband: "do you think so fair, so gentle, so elegant, and fine a lady as this sweet creature is, has no other friends to claim her, dead or alive? Oh! if even it *were* so, an angel would leave the skies to assist her."

"Ay, ay, and pay me my bill too, no doubt," replied the nettled complainant: "but I know you of old," she added. "Any thing that wears a petticoat melts your tender heart in a trice: clap but a cap and pinners upon the devil's dam herself, and she has you immediately."

"That is too true, indeed, my dear," replied the landlord, with a deep sigh: "you know it by experience."

While this *scena* was acting between her master and mistress, Margery was engaged in the stable, in deep consult with a young

Jew pedler returning from the North, who, owing to a wound from a thorn which he had received in one of his feet during his pedestrian tour, had been for some days detained at the inn by severe suffering.

Margery, who was happy not only in the profound admiration of the hostler, a good, honest, hale, ruddy-looking fellow, but also in the secret devoirs and secret douceurs too of her gallant master, had no inclination, rich as her dishonest prize was, to permit it to prove the means of her abandoning her profitable place and favoured lovers at the same time; she fixed, therefore, her eyes on this despised outcast of Christian communion, as a fit agent to whom to transfer not only the fruits of her pillage, but the guilt of it also, should any suspicion happen to alight upon herself. Nor did she greatly fear the general belief of any arguments or allegations which might impeach her honesty, when offered by a Jew.

This poor wretch, sitting upon a heap of straw, was engaged in taking his scant and lenten repast, when Margery, who as devoutly believed that all his race were *rich*, as she did that they were all *rogues*, after some little preliminary haggling respecting the price of a thimble from his travelling trinket-box, demanded whether he would think it too much to give twenty pounds for a fine gold watch and a valuable etui, which, while returning from a recent visit to her mother, she had found upon the road. This communication she however warned the Israelite, if he wished to become a purchaser of the alluded to treasures, to preserve inviolably secret, as no doubt strict inquiries would be instituted respecting so important a loss. The case-knife with which he had lately been carving his humble fare, fell from the hands of the aghast Jew at the present intelligence and requisition, while surprise the most potent scintillated in

the full dark eyes which were now first uplifted to and rivetted upon those of the unblushing vender.

"Not to ransom the mother that bore me from the bonds of the Egyptians, *could* I produce such a sum," sighed the Jew, in a desponding tone.

"You *would* not, you mean?" said Margery, "but for such *golden calves* as these," pulling out the watch and etui from her bosom, and holding them to his eyes.

"I would, indeed, venture much," slowly said the Israelite, after a long and deep silence, during which he had been employed in minutely examining the watch, which he had taken into his own hands, and which, together with the etui, he now instantly hurled into the manger; then, forcibly springing upon the woman, he seized both her arms, notwithstanding the violent though silent re-

sistance of the amazonian Margery. Her struggles relaxed of their force beneath the vigorous defensive of the Israelite, who, placing his brawny back against the treasured manger, wrestled in its defence with a strength and courage which would not have been deemed unworthy of that great champion of his race whose name he bore; and Margery, to her cost, found too late the truth of that assertion to which ages have testified, namely, the difficulty of extracting wealth from the custody of a Jew.

The perfect silence in which their mighty contest had hitherto been carried on was now first broken by Sampson, who thus addressed his female antagonist, or rather, by this time, nearly passive prisoner:—

"The articles which you have even now offered to me for sale, I strongly suspect you to have *stolen:* the *watch* I have particularly recognized, having, but a few hours since,

seen it in the possession of the young lady who now lies so dangerously ill beneath your master's roof."

Margery's deadly paleness silently acknowledged her guilt, and the accuser proceeded, still retaining, though with a gentler grasp, her trembling hands:—

"I will tell you how I came to know that same watch for the property of the fair young lady I have mentioned. When, some days back, I crawled hither, as you may remember, both sick and sore from my painful accident, I produced a small leathern purse of silver, to satisfy the doubts of your mistress as to whether I was able to defray the charges of my entertainment; that purse she insisted on retaining as a pledge for my honest deportment during my stay; but though it is still in her hands, she would consent to allow me no better resting place than the hay-loft over this stable, up into which I was forthwith

hoisted with little less care or ceremony than if I had been a bundle of that animal provender which it is allotted to contain. Dr. Southey turned up his nose at my sore foot, and never again (after his first visit, to which, indeed, your master nearly hailed him up by main force) came near me: the waiter totally disregarded me in my airy lodging; and but for the kindness and humanity of your sweetheart, Robin the hostler, I really think I must have died outright: he fetched the skilful and kind Dr. Livingston to me, who searched, and then poured balm into my festering wound. Robin nursed, Robin fed me, even as did the commissioned ravens of old our holy Prophet; and, finally, in order to continue his kind offices to me, and yet encroach less on his time, which, as a just and faithful servant, he counts not as his own, but as his master's, he conveyed, first my bed, and then myself down here.

"When the two ladies arrived yesterday *(never can I forget yesterday)*, the younger, though seemingly faint and ill, had scarcely been a quarter of an hour in the house, when she again left it, to come hither to direct and request, yea and to enforce those directions and requests not only with sounds but with gifts of silver, that good care and provender might be liberally bestowed upon the poor breathless beasts who had drawn their vehicle hither, ere they were sent back to the place from whence they came. The bright-haired vision was turning to leave the stable, when suddenly her heavenly eyes of mercy glanced upon *me*. Gently approaching, she bent over my lowly bed of pain, and enquired my complaint in a voice which might have soothed death's parting agony, and lulled the struggling soul to premature repose. I remember not precisely my reply; but her next question was, whether necessity, rather than

choice, had not recommended me to so rude a lodging; and, blushing heavenly red, she drew from the very *holy* of *holies*, her *swelling bosom*, a *purse* (that *very purse* which, now displaced from its concealment by our struggling, peeps forth from your's), and offered a piece of gold to my acceptance. However reluctant I felt to impeach the humanity of my landlady, I was still less inclined to rob the truly necessitous, by appropriating an alms I needed not: perhaps, too, the leven of wounded pride might have some share in the confession; but, be that as it may, I told her the truth respecting the treatment I had received from your provident and over-scrupulous mistress. She tremblingly listened to my reasons of necessity, while a disgust, amounting almost to horror, stole over her beauteous features; then, taking out her watch (that *very watch* which you offered to me for sale even now), and anxious-

ly looking on it, she said, 'Thank God! I shall speedily leave this unfeeling roof far behind me; nor will you, young man, need, I trust, much longer to remain its suffering inmate.' She turned to go—to go for ever!

"Oh! what would I not have given, have done, have suffered, to detain her but one poor moment! I touched the hem of her garment with my lips, and humbly besought her, ere her departure, to deign to delight mine eyes with a closer inspection of that rare piece of cunning workmanship, her richly chased gold watch; assuring her that the requested indulgence would afford the most gratifying of all visual feasts to a poor Jew pedler. She smiled at my earnestness, and, half turning from me, her ungloved left hand dropped the glittering bauble into mine.

"Fatal request! fatal view! which then met my anxious gaze! I beheld the gates of heaven closed against me by the express

ordinance of my God himself! With trembling, I restored to the condescending lady her watch. What I *said*, I know not; but I *felt*, as she parted from my strained gaze, like one who is conscious that he has seen the *sun set for the last time!*

"Now," continued the Jew to the still breathless yet again struggling Margery, "fly! save yourself; but first deliver up that purse, which, with the watch and etui, I must and will restore to their rightful owner."

At this moment the hitherto dumb Margery rent the air with her cries and exclamations. "Thieves!—thieves!—murder!" she bellowed, though still firmly detained by the unappalled Israelite. In a moment the hostler entered the stable, and was presently followed by the helper, the landlord, landlady, waiter, and, in short every creature inhabiting the inn and its lonely vicinity, the fair Ugenia alone excepted.

"Oh, master! master!" screamed Margery; "do but come hither! this wretch, this *Jew thief*, has contrived in spite of his *game foot*, to find his way to the sick lady's chamber, and has stolen her beautiful gold watch and other property. I came in here unawares, and caught him looking over his booty; and then he threw the things into the manger; and because I threatened to expose him, here he is attempting to murder me outright!"

Two stout fellows now seized the Jew, while a third hastened to execute summary justice on him, by discharging a blunderbuss, with which, in the "*alarm of fear*," he had armed himself, at his head: this instrument of quick destruction the landlord beat out of the fellow's hands; and, the manger being searched, the watch and etui were found and delivered over to the charge of the now easy and exulting landlady, the tide of whose pity for her much-wronged and suffering guest pre-

sently rose so high, as not only to overflow at her lips, but even at her eyes.

The supposed culprit was immediately bound hand and foot, and it was unanimously resolved that he should be locked up in his customary place of residence, the stable, till the proper officers could be procured from the next town, to conduct him into the awful presence of Justice. Previously, however, to these cautious and prudent arrangements being put into full effect, the Jew, with undisturbed calmness of voice, countenance, and demeanour, thus addressed the now triumphant Margery:—

"I grieve, O fair Philistine! for the fearful fate which, by thy present false accusation of the innocent, thou art still more certainly pulling down upon thine own guilty head: yet more I grieve, because thou art the only lamb of Robin, my kind and friendly assistant in the hour of helplessness and pain;

and perhaps (for I am a solitary, forlorn, and hopeless wanderer on the earth) I would, to save thy youth, thy freshness, thy tender sex, from untimely death, not unwillingly encounter that forfeit myself; for much, alas! of blood and persecution has long desolated the tents of Judah; and my wretched race know, by fatal experience, but too well how to suffer and to submit. But with shame, with stigma, however unmerited, our cup is already overflowing; nor shall one added drop of Marah bitterness swell it's poison draught, or one more invidious tinge rise o'er my people's sorrow-sallowed cheeks, that Sampson Alvarez possesses the power to avert; even though *woman's tender life*, even though *woman's sacred fame*, become the fatal spoils of his devotion! Seize her!" he added: "I offered her safety while I guessed her guilty: she has involved me in danger, though she *knew me guiltless*. Seize

her; and search her bosom: in it you will find a purse composed of silver threads, and crimson silk woven into stripes: it appears more than half filled with gold coins; and that purse, I am ready to swear upon the *five holy books*, I yesterday saw in the hands of the fair female guest who lies sick above. Let her account how that purse, the watch, and the etui, came into her possession; and '*be her blood upon her own head.*'"

"What!" cried the now again enraged landlady, "was there a *purse* too? and would you leave *me*—I mean would you leave the dear sick soul—nothing to pay for her house-room with, thou thievish hussey?"

She rushed upon the conscience-stricken wench, thrust her hand into her kercheif, and drew forth the purse, which was not only recognized by Sampson, but also by the hostler and helper (upon both whom, as well as the postillion who drove them, the sick

lady had, the day before, bestowed her bribes to mercy), as the very one from which they had received them.

"*He* gave it me," cried Margery, pointing to the Jew: "I tell you *he* gave it me, to make me *hold my tongue!*"

The hostler's recognition of the fatal purse in the possession of his beloved had been a silent one: internal agony and internal conflict had been visible in his countenance from the first moment of his entering the stable: he now stepped forward:—

"'Tis a *lie!*" he cried, addressing the shrinking Margery; "a lie, black as the heart that could invent it. I now plainly perceive you design to murder the innocent; and since some one must *swing*, it shall not be my fault if the halter is not put round the right neck; and that neck (the large tears fell over his face), that neck, white as it is, and much, Margery, as I have loved it, is

your own! More than once, and more than twice, this day, have I observed you peep in at this door, and cast your anxious leers at the comely black-eyed Jew; so I watched you close; and when yet again I found you stealing hither, I gave you all freedom to get in, as *you thought*, unseen, and shut the door. But I knew well enough how to lay both ear and eye to cracks in it that former experience had taught me would satisfy my curiosity sufficiently; and though I neither saw nor heard what I expected, I witnessed much worse, and what I wish I had been low in my grave before I had ever known: for I heard you offer the watch and etui to the Jew—saw you produce them from your bosom, and ———."

"Never shall you hear or see again!" shrieked the frantic Margery, snatching up and levelling at him the blunderbuss which lay near her. The landlord, wresting it from

her, fired it off outside the door, observing that was the second time it had like to have caused mischief.

Tears now, for the first time, stood in her eyes: and for a few moments the *woman* prevailed; but, after a short struggle with herself, she again swelled defiance.

"So, my kind master and mistress," said she, "you seem fully inclined to hang me on the word of a Jew, and the testimony, to boot, of a yellow-eyed clown, who squinted through a crevice, and saw double through a door. Pretty evidence, truly! but it won't do, though. The Justice will have more religion than to wink at such a wickedness; besides, I understand enough of law to know, that you must wait till the young body yonder, in the mad fever, can swear to her own property, and be bound over to prosecute."

"But meanwhile, I shall make no bones

of swearing, that *I* saw you, Margery, take the purse, the etui, and the watch, out of her pockets," cried the landlord: "now, what do you say to that?"

There was an amazed and breathless silence; it was broken by the sobbing landlady:—

"You *saw* her do it, did you say? Why then, you wicked, poaching villain, you must have been in the lady's *chamber* to see it, and that, too, while she was in *bed*, *out* of which I am certain she has never been since the time she arrived. *When*, and for *what*, did you go there, you wicked wretch? Answer me *that*."

"I did not go to examine the lady's pockets, as to her means of paying her reckoning, wife," replied Boniface.

"What do you mean by that *insinnivation?*" cried his crimsoned helpmate; "you

are enough to swear one's life away. I have never wronged the dear lady of a brass penny."

"I believe you, Jenny; for you have not yet made out her bill: but if you *will* know *why* I intruded into the lady's chamber, you *shall;* only remember, that, if I have trespassed in point of *propriety*, the fault was committed in endeavouring to make up for your neglect. Had *you* gone a little oftener to the sweet sufferer's sick room, I had never gone near it at all. Thinking, and indeed knowing, that the poor lady was neglected by both of you women, I mixed her up a large goblet of lemonade to cool her fever, and thought I would just place it upon the stand by her bedside; and when she waked out of the feverish doze which you had reported her to be in, it might prove an agreeable surprise, and a long drink of it would do her good, without her ever knowing whe-

ther it was man or woman placed it there: and if, thought I, the bed curtains *should* happen to be a *little* open, why then———."

"What then, you villain!" cried the landlady.

"Why, then, I hoped to get a peep at her angel face again," returned the landlord, "which would have been worth all the angels her pockets contained, were they ever so many. Well! I mixed my drink, and up stairs I stole; but unfortunately, the lady's curtains were all drawn as close as night. I was sorry for that, because she would not see the lemonade when she waked (for I was convinced she was asleep, by the regularity of her breathing); and so, though I confess my hand did tremble very much, I drew the head curtain next the wall a *very leetle* way aside, and set down the goblet on the stand; and *then* I ventured to lift up my eyes, and gaze upon the sleeping beauty.

The bed-clothes were crowded up to her very face, which was flushed with fever: one small hand had escaped its hot bondage, and lay as if lifeless, shaming the counterpane by its snowy whiteness; and I thought, if its lovely fellow was released also, and somewhat of that weight of bed-clothes gently lifted from off her bosom, that her sleep would be easier. But, God forbid that at that mad moment I should have extended a finger towards that lovely lady's bed of innocent rest. I turned away my wishing, sinning eyes, and was preparing to leave the chamber, when suddenly I heard a woman's tread upon the stairs. I thought, wife, that it was your footing; and, had I been *murdering* our guest, I believe I should not have felt equal horror to that which I then experienced. I had no means of retreat: all I could do was, to endeavour to rally courage to face the coming storm; when, luckily, I

bethought me of creeping under the bed. How I effected this so quickly, and so softly, I know not; but I was safely hid when the person (I did not immediately see who it was) stole into the room, and presently I heard Margery's voice mutter, 'So the sleeping mixture takes effect, though perhaps the *two table-spoonfuls* which were ordered would not have served the purpose quite as well as my prescription of four: but now's my time or never.'

"I had observed a woman's clothes and a pair of pockets were hanging on the great chair by the bed-side: Margery went up to that chair, and I heard a slight rustling of the garments, and a jingling of the contents of the pockets, as I supposed. Margery now walked towards the window, and then I gently turned myself, and, lifting up the drawn bed curtains just enough to afford me eye space, I plainly saw her stand near the

window, with the pockets in her hand. She looked fearfully round, more than once; paused a moment, and then fairly thrust her hand into them: from one she drew the purse, and from the other the etui and the watch, and, with very little examination of either, thrust them all three, one after another, into her stays. She then carried the pockets back to the great chair, upon which she softly hung them, and stepped, light as a feather and quick as lightning, out of the chamber, softly closing the door after her.

"I now got from under the poor wronged sleeper's bed, and, trembling all over, took up the lemonade, for fear it should tell tales of my having been there; which, after having witnessed such a deed, I more than ever dreaded should be suspected; and so sneaked down stairs again, heavily lamenting that ever I should have such a secret of

Margery's to keep, for to my dying day I would have kept it."

"But *why*, you wretch," cried the landlady, "*why* would you have kept it? And so we all might have been taken up, and hanged at our own sign post, I suppose, for this wicked slut's sake. You must have been mightily fond of her methinks."

"When the churchwardens come to him for *good security* or *forty pounds*, on account of an *expected young parishioner*, you will, to your till's cost, know how fond he has been, Mistress," cried the malicious and unblushing chambermaid, casting on her master a look of triumph, which said, "by this confession I have more than punished you."

The landlord burst into tears:—"Margery," said he, "your present anger is excusable, and your malice, as far as relates to myself, I forgive. I would have lived

with the knowledge of your crime on my conscience; I would have carried it with me to my grave, even though it disturbed my rest there for ever: but when I see you resolved to become a *murderer* as well as a *thief*, I take hands in opinion with poor Robin there, whom we have both, to our shame, wronged, and forget———."

"Even that you are the father of my expected child," interrupted Margery, in a tone which made all present tremble, save the landlady and the hostler, to whom those dreadful words sounded as a fresh alarum to vengeance.

And now raged a new and unequal battle: the injured wife and indignant rival both at one fell moment flew upon the landlord; till the helper having untied the bonds of poor Sampson, he rushed to the rescue of the amorous but milky-souled host, who, sorely handled, and deeply depressed in spirit, no

sooner found himself delivered from the mighty blows and searching talons of the two avengers, than he quitted the place of battle with all imaginable celerity. The landlady, on being disengaged from her quarry, fell into fits, and was conveyed by the helper and waiter to the bar, where she soon experienced relief and recovery from those cordial fountains over which, as their guardian nymph, she invariably presided; while Margery, at once the unlucky cause and subject of so much unexpected calamity, abandoned by both her lovers, was left to all the preliminary horrors of the fate she had incurred.

It is but too certain (though happy, most happy, is that man who *doubts* the certainty) that injury, anger, and revenge, can "make a hell where they have found a heaven:" such was, at that juncture, the fearful condition of the hostler's originally well consti-

tuted nature, that he believed he could have beheld his Margery even suspended to the fatal tree with pleasure: his principles, his pride, his love, his honour, were all alike wounded; and, spite of Watts's poetical adage, although no *fool*, his anger "did burn till morning light." As for the landlord, his excitement was of a very different kind: he felt himself not *injured*, but an *injurer;* and his sensations were a mingled mass of remorse, shame, and pity, to which also might be truly added no little spice of fear. This depressing combination naturally led him to court temporary retirement; but, to his credit, it must be explained, that the principal labour of his thoughts, while coiled up in his solitary hiding-hole, was, the best possible mode of preserving the unfortunate Margery, by means not only of the pleading her present condition, but also by the suppression of the sick lady's identifica-

tion of her property; a suppression which, from her gentle manners, and the traits of amiability of temper which she had exhibited, he calculated might, in the event of her recovery from her present malady, be relied upon, almost as a certainty.

But where shall be found the magic, the pencil-like pen, competent to colour to the life the horrors of soul which now assailed the miserable Margery? Alone, cold, foodless, fireless, dark, securely locked and bolted into the stable, with her hands firmly bound together by a rough and wiry cord, she was left to wait the dreaded dawn destined to witness her public disgrace, the despair of her mother, the extinction of her every earthly pride, her every earthly hope. And whose hands were they that had so harshly imprisoned her's? They were her own Robin's! and he had left her with a wish that the felon's badge which now formed her

bracelets, might shortly, in quality of a necklace, grace her *throat*. For what will not jealous and outraged love say?—what will it not do?—but what, alas! will it not *feel*, when those wishes, those sayings, those deeds, are accomplished? Oh! those death-dealing feelings! never more of mortal bosom may they be the envenomed dwellers!

The disconsolate lover having seen the complete incarceration of his mistress effected, betook himself to the fields; across which, without regarding the impediment of hedge, ditch, or stile, he continued to wander, lost in mournful rumination, until night overtook him some miles from home; when, faint and exhausted, and mind as well as body-wearied, a ruinated cow-house became the shelter of his heavy head till morning. Sampson strongly remonstrated against the severe arrangements of Margery's imprisonment; he pleaded for a better apartment, freedom of

limb, and light, food, and fire, for the prisoner; but pleaded in vain. That *he* might be permitted to share in her confinement until the constables should arrive, was his next request; but in this petition he was also unsuccessful.

A laugh of derision, interrupted only by remarks and allusions as unjust as they were prurient, echoed round him; and all he could obtain was, that some refreshments (for which he promised to be answerable to the landlady from his own purse) should be brought to the stable for the use of the solitary captive, the key of whose prison was, by her particular command, forwarded to the care of her vindictive mistress herself.

It was early in the evening, when Sampson, with an aching heart, ascended to his former uncomfortable dormitory, the hay-loft: he had, it is true, with every possible mark of consideration, been invited into that *sanctum*

sanctorum, the *kitchen*, a spot which his unhallowed presence had never yet dared to profane. But Sampson's inclinations were at that present time by no means gregarious: melancholy had, indeed, long "marked him for her own," and recent events, of which that very little inn had been the memorable theatre, had strongly contributed to stamp, while life remained, her gloomy seal upon his soul. For the wretched creature beneath him he entertained the sincerest commiseration, and the most earnest wishes to afford her comfort, not only for her own forlorn sake, but for that of her unhappy lover, in whose interests his gratitude and pity were both enlisted.

About this time, the landlady abdicated her fearful and envied throne, the bar, and was conducted to her bed; while a rum bottle, which, but a few short hours before, had boasted its unplumbed depth, now com-

pletely cracked, and topsy-turvy turned, mourned in neglect its ravished honours; transferred, alas! to deck, with added and superfluous rubies, her tell-tale nose!

Previously to this, Dr. Southey had visited his interesting patient, whom he found just awakened from a calm oblivion of many hours: the fever, which had clouded her senses, had nearly disappeared in a gentle but profuse perspiration, and nothing seemed likely to retard her early and perfect recovery, save the want of necessary comforts and due attendance; and these Dr. Southey now zealously determined that his fair patient should have in perfection. Convinced from the story of the robbery, and the well-filled purse and bright articles which had been flashed in his eyes by the triumphant landlady, that the invalid was well able to discharge his bill, he instantly procured for her, from the neighbourhood, a nurse, on

whose ability and attention he could depend; some chicken broth from the kitchen, jams and jellies from his housekeeper's store-room, and, in order to make all sure, a whole army of totally unnecessary but very harmless galenicals from his own shop.

Unhappily, when the deputation from the *Red Lion* arrived at ———— in search of the constables, and other desiderata of the same nature, it happened not to be a *justice hour:* his *worship* was busily engaged at a late hunting dinner (or early supper it might be called) at a nobleman's seat at some miles distance, and it was long, ere even, that deputy of dignity, his clerk, who was, in humble imitation of his patron, employed in unbending himself in some civil recreation or other, could be found; the constables, too, were straying: so that, what with one thing and what with another, it was nearly midnight ere the *posse*

loft flooring, that he could with ease descend through the aperture he had made into the stable beneath. One circumstance, however, not only surprised but indeed alarmed him, even much more than the hazardous enterprise he was engaged in; and that circumstance was, that no *sound*, no testification whatever of existence, had risen from below during the whole time of his working. Could the unhappy girl, whose redemption was the object of his operations, have fallen into so sound a sleep, as that it should still remain unbroken by the din he had been making over her head? Impossible! Was she silent through fear, anger, policy? or had she, indeed, contrived to escape? Again and again he laid his mouth to the aperture he had effected, and hailed her with the proffer of deliverance: still all was silent; and the Israelite, unspeakably disturbed, lost no more time, but with a bound descended

through the aperture into the midst of the stable.

It was much darker in this place than in the loft above; but, even here, the beams of the full moonlight found a partial entrance through the fissure in its ceiling; and he thought he saw the female lying extended on the ground, near the very spot where he last remembered to have seen her standing. He approached nearer, and again and again called on her, but still received no reply. Cold damps now broke forth on the Jew's brow, and started even from the ends of his clammy fingers; and as terrible imaginings fast succeeded each other in his brain, his quivering scalp seemed to lift itself from his scull, and his coal-black hair to bristle, as hastily, yet reluctantly, he drew near and yet nearer to the outstretched female. He felt for her hands; they were untied, and lay at length, cold and stiff, by her sides: he drew

his shrinking palm over her face. Her mouth was gaspingly open: he removed it to her heart; it was *still*—her bosom was *wet—a knife was sticking fast in her right side:* he snatched it forth, and hurled it from him, while a fountain of blood, following its exclusion, sprang up into his face, and deluged it, his hair, and his clothes, with a crimson shower!

For one moment, Sampson seemed to die away with horror; the next, he revived to exertion, for a faint sigh was breathed from the cold lips of Margery. He remembered that his pocket contained a phosphorous tinder-box, the constant companion of his peregrinations. Instantly he ignited a match. The stable lantern, containing an end of candle, hung in the manger; he lighted it, and returning to the body, from which the blood now welled in a torrent, he changed its position, lying the wound uppermost, and, with the apron of the wretched woman and

his own handkerchief, endeavoured to stop the effusion, bandaging over all his stockings and his neckcloth.

Sense was, at this period, not extinct in the wretched Margery: for one instant, as he supported her in his arms, she lifted up her dying head, and, unclosing her filmy eyes, fixed them upon the Jew, faintly uttering, "This is too much from *you*, Sampson, but it is too late!" and the next, fell a heavy corpse-like burthen upon his shoulder.

The Jew now extended the lifeless form upon the straw, and, after raising up the head as high as he could, prepared to leave the stable in search of further assistance; but, to his surprise, the door remained as securely fastened as at first, and it was with much difficulty, owing to the height of the roof, that he at length made shift to reascend to the loft; leaping from the door of which, without remembering, or, for the moment,

feeling his lameness, he flew, rather than ran, to the inn kitchen. The party there were in the midst of a gleeful chorus, when the horror-struck Jew, with an aspect of distraction, and literally bathed in blood, broke in among them with his dreadful annunciation. It was long ere the aghast and trembling revellers assumed presence of mind to demand the key of the stable from the confounded landlady, and courage to follow the steps of their ensanguined and impatient herald.

There lay the hapless Margery, in whom not the faintest sign of life was now discoverable; and the Jew was, with one acclaim, pronounced (from a supposed motive of revenge for her recent accusation of him) her murderer! The aperture which he had made in the ceiling in order to obtain ingress to his intended victim—his early retirement to secure ample time to effect his purpose—the improbability that a woman,

secured as she had been, could have extricated her own hands for the purpose of suicide—his ensanguined appearance, frantic horror, and, above all, *his own case knife* marked upon the haft, at full length, with the name of *Sampson Alvarez*, which was now discovered in one corner of the stable covered with blood—all united to banish doubt and mercy, and stamp conviction of his guilt on every mind.

"Hear me, attend to my counsel, ye mistaken men," cried the undaunted Jew; "and while you accuse the innocent of murder, beware that you become not yourselves accessories to a real crime. Even now, when, to procure the necessary aid, I left this wretched woman, life yet lingered in her mangled bosom: waste not, then, this precious time in idle questions of my guilt or innocence; for, behold, *am I not your prisoner? and is not my trust with the Almighty?* But remove

her instantly from this chilled and dreadful place to a well-aired chamber, and send for that leech of skill, Dr. Livingston, to search her hurt: the dormant spark of existence may yet be, perhaps, preserved."

Having uttered this adjuration, Sampson passively submitted his hands and feet to the cords with which they now bound him with gordian tightness, straining them from each extremity to the centre, much in the same way as a turbot is manacled in readiness for its descent into the fish-kettle. These precautions being taken, the body of Margery was carried into the kitchen, and placed upon the so lately festive board: the ghastly head was then raised up by pillows, and a counterpane was flung over the lifeless form.

Meanwhile, the earnest entreaties of the Jew, who had also been conveyed into the kitchen, to be carried forth into the yard, and even pumped upon, so that the gory stains

which defiled his person might be eradicated, were peremptorily negatived; and it was decided, that, thus stained with the accusing blood of the defunct, he should meet his deserved condemnation.

"I am innocent," he coolly and steadily replied: "the God of my fathers *knows* that I am innocent of all blame, save the intent to aid yon dreadful object to escape that doom of death and shame which may now probably become my own."

At this moment, Drs. Southey and Livingston entered together, and proceeded to examine the body. Dr. Southey pronounced the woman *dead*, and, after severely rating the ignorant boors around him for rousing him out of his warm bed at that uncongenial hour to attend a *dead woman*, he flung out of the house in a pet, ordering them to summon the coroner immediately. Dr. Livingston differed in this, as indeed he did in many other very diverse

appointed to conduct Margery to her examination reached the *Red Lion*, from whence it was among them unanimously agreed that it was now impossible to start again till morning: the kitchen board was, therefore, plentifully spread with ale, gin, pipes and tobacco; and the whole party sat down to pass the intervening period of darkness in convivial enjoyment.

Widely unlike theirs were the dreary hours of the sleepless and anxious Israelite; he much wished to preserve a fellow being from the deadly punishment of a probably first offence; to save her—glorious thought!—perhaps to reformation, to repentance. His dread of a life sacrifice, unless (according to the precepts of his own law) it were that of "*blood for blood*," was horrible; and the deep, long-drawn, groan-like sighs, which, from time to time, rose to his ear from the wretched prisoner beneath, seemed to knell

into his very soul. At length, from *wishing* that she were at liberty, Sampson begun to compass in his own mind the probable means of her *enfranchisement*. He had observed, during his former occupation of the same loft, various rusted carpenters' tools lying together in a corner: groping his way towards it, he easily found them, and, pacing the floor, sought with his feet a certain part of it, which he remembered as exceedingly loose and crazy; he easily found again this weak part. The moon was at the full, and shed a light quite equal to his need, and, handling the opportune tools, he with all possible caution began his work of liberation, first looking out at the loft doors, lest any chance nocturnal straggler should be near: to the inn itself, he was, from its distance, morally certain the sounds he was causing would not penetrate. In the course of an hour's hard labour he had removed so much of the

laid his hand upon the wound in her side. "Woman," he cried, "if one spark of vitality yet lingers in thy chilled bosom, I invoke it, in the sacred name of the God of my fathers, I invoke it to testify to that innocence which I assert. They accuse me of having *murdered* thee: oh! if I *have* done so, may all the yet unspilt blood of thy veins now rush forth from this fell wound, and witness against my word, my life, my salvation!"

A faint scream burst from the throat of Margery; she writhed beneath the pressure of the Jew, and a torrent of warm blood, spouting through the bandages of her wound, *dyed the appellant's hand in gore.* She ground her teeth in agony too great for mortal sufferance: a strong convulsion blackened and distorted her features; and, with one long faint exclamatory groan, she stretched out her feet, and ceased to breathe!

The fortitude which till this miserable

moment had so effectually supported the Jew now totally forsook him: he gazed with glazed eyes and a deathlike ashiness of visage upon the sanguine sign he had demanded. "*Adonai! Adonai!*" he murmured, and dropped, with a heavy marble-like weight, to the floor.

The sorrowing mother of Margery now entered; she had been apprised of the fatal events which had occurred but imperfectly: she came to demand the dead body of her child, not prepared to learn that her good character had died of dishonour—of theft—of suicide; and, by Dr. Livingston's directions, she was forcibly conveyed from the apartment before her aged eyes could encounter the blasting spectacle it contained, and which the landlady, who was now awake and alert, commanded should be forthwith reconveyed to the stable until the coroner should arrive. But Dr. Livingston, who had

been employed in bleeding Sampson, immediately interfered, and peremptorily insisted on the body being immediately carried up stairs, and laid on a bed; and, having made the Jew, whom he had succeeded in recovering from his swoon, drink a large glass of brandy, he immediately followed, and, after fresh bandaging the wound, sent for a poor workhouse nurse, an aunt of Margery's, who had always been much attached to that unfortunate young creature. He directed her to cover the body up moderately, watch it carefully, and alternately moisten the lips with tent wine, and bathe the temples and nostrils with a pungent mixture of vinegar and volatiles. Dr. Southey, who was an auditor of these charges and prescriptions, used little pains to conceal his risibility, and, on taking his departure, ventured to tell his firm friend and patroness, the landlady, that he hoped in a few hours, at farthest, to enjoy the plea-

sure of congratulating his medical brother upon his success in *raising the dead.*

"Sir," cried Livingston, "I shall, perhaps, by that time be enabled, with a sincerity at least equal to your own, to repay your compliments, by eulogizing the sagacity that has summoned the coroner to *set upon the living.*"

Livingston had long been a surgeon on board a man of war: a wound which he had received in consequence of a not utterly unpardonable breach of regulation (namely, leaving the cockpit, when he had not yet one patient below, in order to exchange a blow or two with the enemies of his country) had disabled him for the hardships of a seafaring life; and, with the gallantry of a *Nelson* and the skill of a *Cooper,* poor Livingston, a fish out of water, knew not where to turn for a dinner. Nor was this all: Livingston was, besides, a *disappointed lover:* but let *that*

rest; I am not one of those meddling authors who unkindly rip up the lives, character, and behaviour of their *dramatis personæ*, with as much *sang froid* as a miserly old woman does her seven years' used pincushion, in search of headless pins and rusted needles: suffice it to say, that he betook himself to the little village which is the scene of the present fragment, and set up a doctor's shop—"a pitiful account of empty boxes."

Poor fellow! there was little hope of success. Dr. Southey had long been settled there before him, and had plenty of face, plenty of health, plenty of practice, plenty of cash, and, by consequence, great plenty of friends. Dr. Livingston possessed nothing in plenty, save goodness, skill, and fortitude; yet with these he stood his ground, and obtained a tolerable share of practice for some miles round; mostly, indeed, among the poor, whose doctor he was dubbed—whose adviser,

protector, and friend, he invariably proved himself.

* * * * * *

Dr. Livingston was then called, and examined: he deposed as to the state in which he had found the woman, technically describing the wound, which he represented as not in itself mortally dangerous, though the effusion from it might, he allowed, have proved so, but for the prompt and effective assistance which it appeared had been rendered to her by the prisoner Sampson Alvarez, who was there accused of having himself inflicted it.

* * * * * *

In this discussion, general opinion went very much against the prisoner: as Margery's hands were *tied*, she could not very conveniently *stab herself;* and as she had given so notable a provocation to the Jew—and Jews were well known to be a very malice-bearing

species of animal, moreover; and besides, as the Jew had taken such uncommon pains to get at the place of her incarceration; it followed as almost a matter of certainty that the Jew, and none other than the Jew, had done the deed.

* * * * * *

"But why," questioned Dr. Livingston, who had just returned from a close re-examination of the scene of the transaction, "did the murderer immediately bind up the wound he had made, and so earnestly hasten to tell the tale of blood, instead, after accomplishing his revenge, of securing his safety by instant flight?"

"Could he in his *conscience* endeavour to vindicate a wicked unbeliever, crushed beneath such overwhelming circumstances of guilt?" asked a right orthodox and wealthy farmer, pointing expressively to the bloody knife marked with the prisoner's name.

"The knife! the knife!" was echoed round, till echo herself grew hoarse. Othello's handkerchief was a dish-cloth in point of damning proof, when compared to it.

* * * * *

His conscience, Dr. Livingston calmly said, did not overstretch its duty, when it sided with his judgment in pleading the cause of the friendless, prejudice-stigmatized alien before them: there were examples, he added, when *innocence* by itself, no more than a new-born babe, could stand without support. "Look at this," cried he, drawing from his pocket the cord with which her angry lover had tied the hands of the wretched Margery: "this cord has been neither *cut*, *burst*, nor *burnt*, but evidently *gnawed asunder:* see, several places have been frayed or fretted (most undoubtedly by *dental* effort), ere the desired disseverment was effected; and when it was accomplished, it

was at three several junctions separated. First, most probably, she divided the unmanly ligature here in the centre, and then relieved each tortured wrist, for that they have been tortured their galled and swollen state will sufficiently prove."

The cord was examined, and testified, as strongly as any dumb witness could testify, to the truth of the doctor's statement: he then replaced it in his pocket, from which, however, during the progress of the examination, it was somehow or other extracted.

"Now," continued Dr. Livingston, "without at all admitting the possibility, nay, the strong circumstantial probability, that Margery liberated her own hands with her own teeth, why should you suppose that the Jew, or any other person that wounded her, first untied her hands, and then hurled to a distance the cord which had secured them? Would not a *bound* victim, think you, better

suit a murderer's knife? But there are *farther* arguments, and in my opinion still stronger ones, that Margery has offended against *herself:* behold this *tooth;* it was picked up but now from the stable; see, 'tis newly broken off short in the midst, evidently (for 'tis white, wholesome, and strong) by an over-exertion of its powers: see also those *filaments of hemp;* I picked them (in presence of several witnesses) *from the mouth of Margery myself!* Her *lips,* too, poor creature! are *grazed* and *fretted* by the friction of her cruel task."

* * * * *

Once more he led them to the pallet of Margery, and, unclosing her rigid jaw, compared the broken fragment of the tooth with the part still remaining in it: they joined exactly.—Dr. Southey came up to the body, touched it, shook his head, looked a sneer at the Doctor of the poor, and, suppressing with

his handkerchief a chuckle, retired. Livingston ordered his old woman to cover up the body again, and the room was cleared of all but its attendant.

* * * * *

The VERDICT:

"*Came to her death by her own hands, or those of some person or persons unknown.*" And Sampson Alvarez was detained on strong suspicion.

At this moment the mother of Margery rushed into the assembly, and exclaiming, "She lives! she lives!—she has spoken!—she has confessed all!—the Jew is innocent!" sunk at the feet of Livingston in a paroxysm of gratitude and joy. The Jew put on his *tallait** and his *tephylyms**, and began to warble his devotions in a no *very piano*

* Certain ceremonial appendages worn by the Jews at their devotions.

tone; while Dr. Southey, looking a *leetle* oddish, made a rather unceremonious exit.

But, where is the luckless Robin all this while? Alas! for poor Robin, I could have wished to have ended this matter merrily; but truth forbids it, though I must confess, that, in this case, I conform to her dictates with reluctance. It was Robin, who had stolen the cord from the pocket of the humane doctor; he had 'passed a houseless, anguished, fevered night, a fasting day: love, jealousy, revenge, pride, shame, grief, pity, remorse, despair, all combined to make a madman of him. He was found suspended to a beam in the stable, having made the very cord with which he had bound the hands of his mistress the instrument of his own destruction. As for Margery, she was doing extremely well till the fatal end of poor Robin was incautiously communicated to her: the shock was too powerful for her much

weakened system to sustain; and she died with her hand locked in that of Sampson Alvarez, whom she had entreated to see; whose saving goodness, after the commission of her suicidal act, she remembered and acknowledged, and for whose temporal and eternal happiness she offered up her latest prayer.

But the shocking scenes in which he had lately been so principal though reluctant an actor, shook not only the equable mind but even the firm frame of the Jew, who was seized with a nervous fever, for his recovery from which he was (under Providence) indebted solely to the humanity and skill of Dr. Livingston, who had him removed to his own house, and tended not only his body, but soothed also his mind, with almost parental interest, parental care: *soothed* only; for, alas! Sampson bore a bosomed malady, which no mental medicine, however skil-

fully administered, might ever hope to cure. The Doctor, who was pleased at discovering in this wandering alien a cultivated mind and a kindred soul, detained him long, and parted from him, at last, reluctantly.

"Blessed," cried the weeping Jew, as he earnestly wrung the Doctor's proffered hand, "be those healing hands of thine; and over thy roof of hospitality long may the vine of plenty mantle, and the cherubim of peace spread its snowy wing. For me, I am impelled forth again to wander, again to want, again to be derided and contemned of the ignorant and the bigotted, who know not, or *remember* not, that of the race which they despise and loathe was born their King and their God! For thee, thou man of mercy, thy memory shall be sweet unto me, even as was the gushing fountain of the rock to the forty years' pilgrims of the desert; refreshing as the prophet's sheltering gourd, and

precious as the incense of mighty price." He addressed himself to his onward path, but Livingston followed, and, for yet an instant longer, staid his course.

"Sampson," he said, "you depart, but it is not in peace: there is a sorrow, a secret sorrow, clinging to and weighing down your heart. Sampson! it is no vain, no idle curiosity that impels me to seek your confidence; but I esteem, respect you. I know, I feel, that a soul like your's harbours no vile concealments; and I would fain, in sympathetic and inviolate confidence, participate that ill which human agency, I fear, may not remove."

The Jew turned towards his friend, and, rivetting on him his luminous eyes, thus replied:—

"Try not, I beseech thee, the secrets of my heart with questions, when the God of my fathers commanded them, by his servant

Moses, to make unto him a sanctuary, that he might thenceforward dwell among them: he willed, also, that therein a *vail* should be suspended and drawn close, to guard from profanation the *adytum*, wherein rested the light of Heaven. There it shone for ages; it expired not amidst the bands of the spoliating Philistines: it glowed with double glory in the Temple of the Son of David, nor disdained to illumine that humbler edifice, which, in after times, the captive prophet, with pious toil, raised to his Master's name. But when the city of the *chosen people* fell—when she was for her sins, and the disunion of her sons, given up to her enemy—when, I say, the blood-stained children of Romulus violated the courts of the Lord, and the shrinking vail of the sanctuary fell beneath the sacrilegious hand of the stranger, then departed the *Shekinah*, and returned no more."

ESTELLA,

OR,

THE FAMILY PICTURE.

Mighty in grief, it haunts the shuddering plain;
But earth, nor heav'n, nor hell, that mystic being may claim.

Written in 1823.

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

GENTLE READER,

IT is with all the once customary diffidence of a true-born English woman, untravelled, and unversed in the *haut ton* of either the past or present day, that, after full one hour and three quarters pause, between the invocation above addressed to you and the first syllable that follows it, I venture to request your indulgent reception of the following *debutante* little work, which a peculiar chain of circumstances has allotted to the introduction of a *chaperon*, who perhaps of all others to whose charge it might have been entrusted, is the least *auffai* to the mode and manner in which such an arduous duty might

be discharged to the best possible advantage of the object of her solicitude. But, to abbreviate this preface to a preface, and descend from the language of metaphor (a language which, in fact, my unskilled and still more unpractised pen is ill able to support), permit me to explain by what accident it has fallen out that all "*my tediousness is thus to be bestowed upon you.*"

Be it then first known, that I am a childless widow in the possession of good health, and moderate but independent circumstances, and live somewhat more than two hundred miles from the metropolis, in a little house, situated in a little village, where I have long enjoyed content and quiet, two calm blessings, which those who inhabit larger dwellings and more populous neighbourhoods cannot easily command together. My acquaintance are few, chiefly of my own sex,

and neither of ages, tastes, habits, nor fortunes, greatly dissimilar to my own: in point of intellectual endowments, however, I presume on no such resembling character; *Mrs. MacAnnal* and *Miss Zephyrina Cloud-castle*, two of my most estimated intimates, being both distinguished by mental powers and educational acquirements infinitely superior to any that either nature or art have vouchsafed to bestow on me.

It is now somewhat more than ten years since I first settled at H————, and for a considerable part of that period did a little *literary coterie*, of which, very soon after my arrival, I had the honour and happiness of becoming the institutress, subsist in cheerfulness and amity, all its members seeming to be actuated by but one general spirit, that of giving and receiving pleasure. But, alas! those enviable times are past and gone: in-

quatre-fold alliance. Four nights in each week did we alternately assemble at each other's houses and apartments (for Mrs. MacAnnal boarded at the curate's, and Miss Cloudcastle, and latterly her brother, who is a naval officer, at *Gander farm)*, for the purpose of having our various *pre-announced* choices and selections rehearsed in regular rotation by a reader chosen from among ourselves: but, unfortunately, the physical defects and infirmities of myself and Mrs. Tendertear unavoidably incapacitating both of us from a just and due participation of that arduous and fatiguing office, the exercise of it rested solely between Mrs. MacAnnal and the fair spinster, and equally ably and kindly did they ever discharge it.

In what various little manners and ways the clergyman's worthy wife and myself endeavoured to signify our sense of obligation for favours at once so grateful to our needs,

and so gracefully accorded to them, "as made those gifts more sweet," it is utterly irrelevant to the present purpose to explain: it is sufficient the public should be aware that the friendly and humane indemnity and exception thus so seasonably afforded us was not utterly cast away upon the barren soil of disregard or ingratitude.

A *new* work once thoroughly gone through, we usually devoted our next meeting to the purpose of examining, recapitulating, suggesting, and commenting, upon its merits and defects; for defects, as well as merits, new and fashionable works, as well as old and unfashionable ones, must ever, in this world of imperfection, continue to contain; and cards were seldom permitted to piece out the vacant hour, which the subject-exhausted disquisition of a short romance of only, perhaps, five volumes quarto, sometimes afforded: such a *rare* hour was generally spent

with supreme gratification to three individuals of our party; for Miss Cloudcastle would, on those occasions, favour us by communicating select extracts from her own literary labours: these were, at that time, chiefly of a poetic nature, and generally considered as very favourable specimens of the spinster's genius.

Once, indeed, Mrs. McAnnal, being somewhat closely pressed to acknowledge that the imagery in one of Miss Cloudcastle's odes displayed uncommon fancy, replied, rather tartly, "A weel! a weel! ladies: I'll na deny the uncommon fancy o' the composition; sa ye'll na urge me to discover its common sen." To evitate, if possible, the recurrence of unpleasantnesses resembling the above, or that state of curiosity-tortured suspense which the unforeseen delay of the truant seventh and last volume of some most interesting romance (vainly endeavoured to be atoned for by a

sole of eloquent deprecatory excuse from the polite Mr. Trashlender, the librarian), sometimes inflicted on us, it was that I, at length, purely ("pour passer le temps") reluctantly sanctioned a more frequent introduction of those *party-spotted* playthings, by sectarists so uncivilly denominated the *books* of his *autumn Majesty*: yet, in justice to Mr. Trashlender's general punctuality and attention, I must observe, so *seldom* did the drying up of that literary stream for which we all mutually thirsted occur, that Christmas would retire, and again return to receive her *holly honours*, ere our single pack of cards could, even by the goddess of nicety herself, (if such a goddess there be), have been deemed inadmissible.

Maugre, however, all my politic and truly well-intentioned precautions to stem the tide of schism, and avert the triumph of incipient dissention, still for some time before the final

breaking out of open war, and our consequent unhappy separation and dispersion, several other slight flings and bickerings occurred between our satiric widow and ill-appeased poetess; their disputes now generally turning upon the construction of those elegant romances which have emanated, and are still emanating, from the pen of a *certain great genius*, and which are generally founded on *historic events*, and *guarded* by *historic data*. Each fresh coruscation from that same *northern star* of literary celebrity, Mrs. McAnnal worshipped with a fervor of adoration little inferior to that with which the Persian hails the herald beams of his fervid divinity; while with a prepossession, in which the enthusiasm of a correct and discriminative taste was perhaps pardonably blended with somewhat of the *Amor Patria*, she dogmatically excluded from the pale of literary salvation almost all other novels and romances,

whether old or new, save only those written by him who *owns himself the Author of Waverley* and several works beside which have succeeded it, and to whom the world also ascribes the fathership of some others which bear a prior date, establishing their indentity upon this very rational principle, that *no one else* could have written them *half as well.*

Now our spinster, though she ever uniformly rendered to those rapidly born, yet truly admirable and highly finished, productions all just tribute of praise, still contended that the *historical bases* on which the plot or story of many of them are founded does in some degree *deduct from* rather than *add to* their well earned fame; alleging that a fable engendered in and spun wholly from the author's brain, unaided by the conservated records of past facts, or the introduction of the shades of those departed characters who have once

before really played similar parts on the stage of real life, was (if well designed and skilfully conducted) not only likely to prove more acceptable and grateful to that natural thirst for and enquiry after novelty, which Providence, doubtless, in order to awaken and summon into action its latent and perhaps highest powers and resources, has implanted in the human mind, but also as far more honourable to the genius and capacity of its inventor; as would be an elegant and judiciously constructed edifice, elevated and completely finished by the sole labour of the very architect who drew its original plan, compared to one even more elaborately built and adorned, but constructed from the design and raised upon the foundations previously conceived and prepared by another: those positions, however, though not only plausible and specious in theory, but even just and reasonable in common practice, were still suc-

cessfully disputed, and often even utterly dispossessed by the successive examination of each new production of, perhaps, the greatest novelist which the present or any past age has produced; and truth, attired and bedecked in all the imagination facinating witcheries of fiction, would burst upon our at once gratified fancies and convinced judgments with a two-fold, an entire triumph.

Upon such occasions, the highly exulting daughter of Caledonia would dictatorially argue, that as, in painting, our admiration and approval are commonly excited and commanded in proportion to the nearness of the subject's resemblance to reality, so, in writing, nothing can legitimately and lastingly please, but the same close and accurate imitation of the scenes, events, and characters, of human life; adducing, as a further corroboration of the justice of her argument, the almost general use made by former ficti-

tious biographists, legend writers, and story tellers, of that unfailing *pas per tout* to the attention and approval of the *million*, namely, "IT IS ALL TRUE," a mode of recommending their manufactures, which from the days of *Autolychus* down to those of *Jedediah Cleishbottom, Captain Clutterbuck*, and *Dr. Dryasdust*, had, she averred, proved paramountly successful to every other which the utmost ingenuity of *authorcraft* has since devised or adopted.

To this opinion Miss Cloudcastle would readily assent (indeed, she could not well do less), having, as will be hereafter seen, sanctioned its utility by her own adoption; but to this unavoidable concession she never failed to tack a peremptory veto to all adulteration, disguisement, and misrepresentation of pre-established facts; allowing romance to exercise her creative powers only within her own especial realms; adding, as the

strongest possible justification of her preference of inventive talent, that even Mrs. McAnnal's praise-defied author himself had, on various occasions, most successfully as well as gracefully deviated and departed not only from the *pale of record*, but even the *bounds of probability* and *nature* themselves; instancing, among other examples to be met with in his numerous works, the *superhuman machinery* made use of in the *Monastery*.

"And why (boldly questioned the spinster) may not *lesser* aspirants of fancy be permitted to follow in so bright a tract?"

"Principally because the attempt were idle and dangerous as the *aerial flight of the tortoise*," cried the widow; adding, with enthusiasm the most vivid,

"For S****'s ideal ne'er can copied be;
"None to such heights dare soar, save only *he!*"

At all events, none in our little circle were vain, or at any rate hardy, enough to contradict

this assertion; and as Mrs. McAnnal's acquaintance and influence in our village, and indeed the neighbouring market-town itself, was very extensive, her attachment to an already popular and powerful party was rewarded (with more justice, indeed, than such epidemic attachments usually are) by added praise and increasing proselytes. Yet would Miss Cloudcastle fail not during those agonizing intervals of delay (which, since the deserved celebrity and consequent universal request of the *Scotch romances* now, alas! but too often occurred between the first announcement of its publication, and the slow travel of one of those comets of genius from the solar centre of fashion towards our chill Georgium Sidus circle of dulness) to plead for the perusal of some of her *old fashioned, fancy, web-woven favorites*, the production of some less gifted, or, as *she* would lament, less fortunate pens: but, lackaday! the attempt seldom served

other purpose than to weaken the very cause it was meant to sustain; only proving by the force of comparison (and comparisons, the proverb doth most truly say, are odious) the deserved superiority of those writings of the present day, by which they are (as well from *Taste* as *Ton*) superseded and eclipsed, and consequently the general justice of Mrs. McAnnal's criticism.

Overworsted as she was, still the fair championess of unadulterated fiction appeared undismayed, and would seldom fail, even at our very next meeting, to return to the charge with new ardour, and a reinforcement of argumentative weapons. The veritable and sacred character of history was, she would say, degraded and profaned by the well-fashioned but meretricious trappings with which it has been, and still is, the blameful taste of the writers of works of mere amusement too frequently to adorn her. Roses were, she

maintained, often wreathed by them around heads which adders should entwine; and that the flattered portraits of dead villains, whose real features the pencil of departed justice had left traced in the colours of their hearts, now grinned with ghastly smiles upon posterity from gay frames of adulatory gilding. Crooked but successful policy was, she insisted, permitted in some instances to steal and wear the garb of justice; while laurels stained in their acquisition with superfluous blood, dipt in the streams of genius, borrowed from that immersion alone their undeserved tint of unfading verdure. The young and the unlearned were thus equally led to form erroneous conceptions of the beings, and draw unfair conclusions from the transactions, of former times, and Truth, outraged even in the strong hold of her own dominions, so far from being, as formerly, the favourite model of falsehood, was herself

compelled to wear the usurper's colours, and follow, a fettered captive, in her gaudy train!

Many other strictures, complaints, animadversions, and allegations, did Miss Cloudcastle deal forth, all on the same prolific topic, but never without drawing down upon herself, from her equally well read and infinitely more irritable adversary, such a shower of caustic contradictions, rhetorical retorts, and sometimes, too, resistless refutations, as at length completely *blackballed* the yet lingering genius of concord from our society; to which Miss Cloudcastle was the first to bid adieu, announcing, at the same time, that she had devoted the entire leisure of the last stormy six months to the composition of a romance upon principles designed to form a new illustration and support of that same argument which had lately so often disturbed the peace of our once calm convention, her's

being purely a work of imagination and fancy, unpropped by historic evidence, unidentified by chronological record, yet calculated to, at once, enchain the attention, invoke the passions, and interest the heart, because describing wonderful circumstances and situations, yet representing man acting amidst, at it were, new elements, in all th native colourings of human feelings, frailties, and policies.

Meanwhile herself and brother intended, she said, to make a tour to Ireland, the native country of his late spouse, and where, indeed, some important pecuniary concerns absolutely required the lieutenant's personal interference and inspection, but that he had promised, immediately on her *work reaching a second edition*, to accompany her back to England, when she should undoubtedly rejoin our society; "Therefore, (added she) as the success of my romance is somewhat more than probable, the happy epoch of

our re-union is not, I trust, very far distant."

Miss Cloudcastle had scarcely ceased to speak, when I was greatly shocked, as well as surprised, by the sound of a *horse-laugh*, which burst from the strongly constituted lungs of Mrs. McAnnal, whom astonishment alone (as she afterwards declared) had hitherto held mute. Mrs. Tendertear, though already more than half a *convertite* to the taste and opinions of her too dogmatical boarder, changed colour more than once, and, silently drawing up, fanned herself with peculiar vehemence, every flirt of the little eloquent ivory engine of ventilation seeming to express, with that energy which her timid tongue refused to exert, her sense of so glaring an infringement of the dues of delicacy and the laws of propriety and good manners. For my part, painful as articulation, even upon the most *pleasing* subjects, ever is to me, I could not avoid verbally rebuking a deportment so

subversive of the rules of polite society, and almost, indeed, of the sacred and unalienable rights of humanity itself; but my remonstrance was (I will own it) very guardedly and temperately expressed; for the egotistical eulogium just pronounced upon her own performance by my maiden friend had considerably disgusted me, which momentary sense of adverse feeling did certainly, in a great degree, weaken that tone of applausive encouragement and support which the peculiar circumstances of a moment so distressing would otherwise have, in some sort, demanded from any feeling mind, more particularly when that mind was, like mine, fully convinced of the insulted party's general adequacy to the at least respectable execution of the task in question.

But I had not laboured through half my harangue, when, happily for myself as hearers, it was put a stop to by the more ready

utteranced widow herself; for Mrs. McAnnal's own excellent sense, as well as it so readily presents the weak, ridiculous, and objectionable sides of other people's sentiments and conduct, seldom permits her long to nourish those errors which prejudice, obstinacy, or opposition, may have engendered in her own: reproached, doubtless, by reflection, for the culpable and cruel indecorum into which she had by the precipitancy of her humour been hurried, she now arose, and, glowing with a thousand ingenuous and graceful shames, addressed a very concise, but earnest and energetic, apology for her misbehaviour to the resentment-labouring authoress; concluding by declaring, that, spite of the contrariety of their tastes and opinions on some particular subjects, such was her conviction and estimation of Miss Cloudcastle's extensive powers of invention and happy flow of eloquence, that, were it humanly

possible for the pen of any obscure and solitary innovater to lead back the present redeemed taste of romance readers to its former heresy of monstrous prepossession, it was her serious belief that no writer existing was more capable of accomplishing the *Danaides out-toiling task* than Miss C. herself. The spinster, little propitiated by this deprecatory compliment, acknowledged it only by a sullen, sour, and silent nod; and a long and painful pause ensued, till Mrs. McAnnal once more broke the profound and unusual silence which reigned among us, by stating her design of also becoming a temporary absentee: it was her purpose, she informed us, to set out almost immediately on a visit to her relations and acquaintance in Scotland, assuring myself and Mrs. Tendertear, however, that nought save the discharge of so dear and long procrastinated a duty could, after the previously notified se-

cession of Miss Cloudcastle, have induced her to leave us.

The natural stimulations and longings of land and kindred had been, she said, for years the lightest in the balance, when weighed against her long-tried southern friendships; nay, even the promise of a bribe of all others the most desirable to her wishes, had hitherto proved insufficient to make her turn her face towards home: this bribe she now described as having been long held out to her by her much respected seventh cousin *Mr. Saunders Pounceparchment*, advocate, at Edinburgh, being of no less importance than the self-same very identical pen with which a good part, if not the whole, of that *crown of all romances, Waverley*, was written. This precious relic, Mr. Pounceparchment (who was well aware of his fair relative's devotional predilections) had, with some little charge and no little pains, procured from a certain

retainer of the great incognito's, with whom he has the honour of a professional acquaintance, and had hitherto carefully conservated for the express purpose of thereby at once obtaining and rewarding the much desired visit of his long truant cousin. "Yes, it will, at length, be mine," exclaimed the devotee, "and I will enclose it in a casket, smaller indeed, but little less rich, than that once allotted by the world's conqueror to contain the works of its then greatest poet!"

Another awkward stillness ensued, which the now evidently offended widow endeavoured to fill up by deliberately adjusting her bonnet, plaid, and gloves. The awful moment of leave-taking could, at last, no longer (any more than our tears) be delayed: she shook us all somewhat coolly (Miss Cloudcastle not excepted) by the hand, saying, "Dinna greet sa ower much gude friends, sin, sa sure as Miss Cloudcastle's romance

ever numbers twa editions, sa sure will be I back to the south, and a candidate for my auld seat amaingst ye ance mair: sa joy be wi ye a' tull that *mair nor probable* event happens!" Here her old inveterate ironical laugh burst forth (as it would seem in spite of her); for she hurried away, thrusting her handkerchief to her mouth, leaving behind her a *trio* (for Mrs. Tendertear was too much agitated to accompany her boarder's precipitate exit) which, from various cogent causes, was but ill disposed to imitate her risibility.

The very next morning, faithful to her word, she departed for the land of her fathers, and Miss Cloudcastle, whose pulse, I verily believe, regained its customed healthful beat with the certainty of her absence from H———, no sooner judged her at a safe distance, than she called upon me late one evening with her manuscript carefully treasured up under her cloak, and, to my

inexpressible surprise and consternation, forthwith delegated to me the trust and care of causing the before-mentioned production to be printed, published, and ushered into the world with all possible correctness, expedition, and eclat. This was not all: Miss Cloudcastle, moreover, accompanied the above most unexpected commission with a request still more singular, being nothing less than that I would assume the task of introducing her romance to the public by writing for it a *preface!!!*

"The next wonder to this (exclaimed I, in the fulness of my indignant amazement) can only be that some mad actor or novelty-hunting manager will request my services to speak a prologue for them:"—indeed, I do not remember half the extravagant things I both said and thought; for the oddity as well as temerity of my friend's demand did absolutely, for the time, unhinge and strangely

confuse what little understanding I am gifted with. At length, believing (and we are generally ready to *believe* what we *wish*) that she might after all, be only jesting with me, I told her she had probably mistaken the *last day of March* for the *first of April;* but, alas! I did but "lay a flattering unction to my soul." Miss Cloudcastle soon found means to convince me that she was but too certainly serious in her purpose, and, that conviction once fully effected, 'tis utterly impossible for any terms to convey to the reader's apprehension an adequate conception of the extreme perturbation of mind, confusion of idea, and intolerable annoyance of spirit, which the mere suggestion of undertaking such an unwonted office occasioned to me. For more than two hours did I vainly endeavour to argue my friend out of her preposterous prepossession in favour of my imaginary editorial capacities: Miss Cloud-

castle listened to me, indeed, with the most devoted patience (a laudable example, I am sure, to all future *ear-racked auditors*); and when, at last, my pleading was concluded, thus replied:—

"My dear Mrs. Medium, I have not a friend or acquaintance in the world, yourself alone excepted, of whom I could with equal propriety ask this favour, or who, being so importuned, and complying with the importunity, could execute the needful service half so dexterously. My brother, your at present very *new* acquaintance, is, I need not repeat it to you, my sole remaining relative; and though, perhaps, one of the best-hearted creatures in the universe, he is certainly one of the worst-headed, and, besides, is as unwilling as unfitted for the business in question."

"I know not as to that," answered I: "my introduction to your brother has been too

recent to warrant a decided judgment on his abilities. But why do you not apply to the *curate?* He is, undoubtedly, a man of learning and discernment."

"But," interrupted Miss Cloudcastle, "he is, you know, bound by a promise, never to be either seen or heard to read a romance. That he would, then, write a *preface* to one, even for the *great unknown* himself, is certainly less than likely; unless, indeed, in imitation of his critical countrywoman, he were to become his *boarder*."

"But Mrs. Tendertear," suggested I,——

"Can no more *write* a *preface* than she can *see* to *read* one," cried the authoress; "besides, understand you not, my friend, that, even were eyes and intellects equal to the work, such an effort in my behalf would be high treason to the tastes, humours, and opinions of her *ci devant profitable inmate,* to whose possible return *in futero* such a pro-

cedure would place an insurmountable bar?"

"Still," said I, "you leave unreckoned upon your strongest force: it lies, my dear Miss Cloudcastle, within *yourself*. Who so competent to pilot your little bark into port as its *builder?* for who so interested in its safety and success?

"An oath—an *oath*—I have an oath in heaven!
"Shall I lay perjury upon my soul? No! not for *fame!*"

declaimed the spinster.

"But I cannot for my part," said I (having hastily overlooked the beginning of her manuscript) see the least necessity for any other proem to so small a work than the introductory matter by which I perceive you have yourself already preceded it."

"I am, nevertheless, determined," answered Miss Cloudcastle, "that my work shall never

be printed until it has from twenty to thirty pages of explanatory ——"

"*Nonsense* tacked to it, to spoil its success," cried I, finishing a sentence in my turn: but the spinster's final reply, like an ably planned and long-reserved *russe de guerre*, by suddenly surprising me in that quarter in which I am of all others most assailable, completely mastered my hitherto obstinate resistance, and gained her the day at once.

"My much esteemed friend," said she (tenderly taking my hand, and carrying it toward the region of her heart, while tears stood in her eyes), you must, by the *tenacity* of my importunity on the present subject, be convinced that your allegations of incapacity, and inaptitude for the task assigned you, however creditable to your own well-known, self-depreciating judgment, appear in a widely different and far more favourable point of

view to mine: but whether in good truth you are, or are not, competent to the advantageous discharge of the required duty, it is a fact of indubitable certainty, that your present obstinate denial of your (even if you will have it so) feeble aid in this my present aidless condition can only be compared to churlishly refusing to a trembling, unprotected friend the shelter of your roof during a perilous tempest, merely because you are too proud to display the inferiority of your furniture and accommodations."

Well aware of my constitutional reluctance to deny any honest service within the compass of my power to friend or even enemy in exigence, Miss Cloudcastle had resorted to this her ultimate argument in full confidence of its success, and her augury was not unfaithful; for finally she "wrung from me my slow leave" to *leave* her *manuscript* on my table, together with a promise that I would

supply it with the best preface which the very limited powers of my ingenuity could furnish; but she did not, I must premise, compass those (to *me*) highly important as well as unpleasant points without submitting to two especial articles of compromise and compact in her turn: the first was, that I might be at full liberty to write the preface I was thus *(nolens volens)* condemned to compose exactly in what manner, terms, and style, I found most agreeable or convenient to myself, without any the slightest let or question, whether that manner, terms, or style, might chance to chime in with her approval or not: and, secondly, that she would solemnly promise never again, on any pretence or argument whatsoever, to either directly or indirectly ask or even hint a wish for a repetition of the like sacrifice on my part.

Miss Cloudcastle easily subscribed to both

conditions: the preface, she assured me, she never meant to read, or desired even to hear of, till it was in print; and with respect to the other proviso, she expressed herself in these very words:—

"You already know I have decidedly determined that my own pen shall never herald to the public its first literary effort; and even should that effort obtain a portion of success commensurate to my wishes, I shall yet, I verily believe, remain reluctant to act the part of my own advocate on any fresh occasion: but thus much I can venture to premise, neither you nor any other person shall be troubled to compose a preludium to my next work, as I am resolved to trust its apology to the work itself."

It was by this time past midnight, and we had but just dispatched a hasty and truly *petit souper*, when Lieutenant Cloudcastle, surprised and disturbed at the unusually long

absence of his sister, knocked, for the first time in his life, at the door of my cottage, to enquire whether aught amiss had happened to me or herself. The Lieutenant is a recent widower, and had not, at that time, been settled more than three weeks with his sister at Gander Farm: previously to that he had resided, ever since the termination of the war, in the south of France, in which country the delicate health of his late wife had long held him a voluntary prisoner. It was the well-intentioned advice and earnest invitation of his affectionate sister, who reasonably hoped that change of place and objects might aid the erasive hand of time in dispelling the distressing melancholy with which the loss of his much esteemed partner had deeply imbued his feeling mind, that had, at length, prevailed on him to take at least a temporary leave of the scene of his unavailing regret, and once more revisit his native shores.

I should have remained irrecoverably shocked, had I left the good gentleman, who had lately, as his sister informed me, experienced (in consequence of the change of air) some smart symptoms of the *gout*, one tenth part of the time outside my door at such an ungenial hour which I have here wasted in scribbling about his concerns.

Hurrying him into the parlour, I pressed him, spite of all his polite resistance, into my own easy chair by the fire-side, and, having farther succeeded in prevailing on him to lay aside his huge enveloping boat-cloak, whose services would else be less acceptable and salutary when again exposed to a colder atmosphere, I directed my maid, Mabel, to heat, with all possible expedition, a small silver tankard full of elder wine of our own brewing; and pressing the humble cordial, accompanied by some slices of home-made cake, upon the acceptance of my old friend

and new visitor, enjoyed, while witnessing the *goût* with which they partook of the simple but wholesome refection, the true delights of unostentatious hospitality. The Lieutenant's anxiety respecting our safety being now effectually removed, his sister thought fit to acquaint him with my consent to that request which had formed the object of her long-protracted visit; and the manly, respectful, and grateful manner in which he added *his* thanks to *her's*, made me blush for the reluctant and ungracious mode in which that much overvalued consent had been bestowed.

Miss Cloudcastle (late or rather early as was the hour) now entered into a deep and many-branched disquisition of that heart-centered subject, her romance; but the Lieutenant, induced, I doubt not, by the observation of the cloud of chagrin with which the revival of that unacceptable subject had sud-

denly overcast my countenance and spirits, soon dexterously diverted the conversation into an opposite channel; and, notwithstanding an air and tone almost amounting to sadness, which ever and anon most strangely yet pleasingly mingled with and modified his liveliest sallies, time flitted on so lightly, that when he drew his watch, and notified, with a surprise in which I thought his sister did not appear to participate equally with myself, that it was half past three o'clock, I did not imagine he had been at the cottage more than twenty minutes: but the nearly expiring fire, waning moulds, and sleep-lacking looks of poor Mabel, as shiveringly, and with ill-repressed yawnings, she lighted my guests to the door, soon rectified my unaccountable mistake. This parting, too, like that of Mrs. McAnnal, proved a final one; for at seven o'clock, the same morning, the brother and sister set out from H——— towards the

point of their ultimate destination. My windows command the high road: I followed their chaise with my eyes; and while the rapidity of its whirling wheels reminded me of the velocity with which the hours had lately flown in their society, I could not but ascribe the seeming unusually accelerated pace of time to the more than commonly agreeable manner in which it had been employed.

Lieutenant Cloudcastle is really a very well-informed man, and of manners at once dignified, yet unassuming: perhaps those seeming contrarieties in his deportment had been more happily described and reconciled by saying that he appears to equally well understand and practise all that is due to himself and others. He has also been a most brave and meritorious officer, a character best of all calculated to lend too, as well as receive, lustre from his other merits; and

there are, I believe, few of my countrywomen who do not coincide with me in opinion, that the myrtle wreath never appears to half so much advantage on the brow of man as when it is interspersed with laurels.

Notwithstanding all Miss Cloudcastle's depreciation of her brother's literary talents, and his own extreme diffidence on the same subject, I do most devoutly believe he could easily have made a better preface to her book than I have done; at all events, I have no doubt but the readers of *this* will concur in opinion with my Lord Duke, in *High Life below Stairs*, "That he could hardly have made a *worserer*."

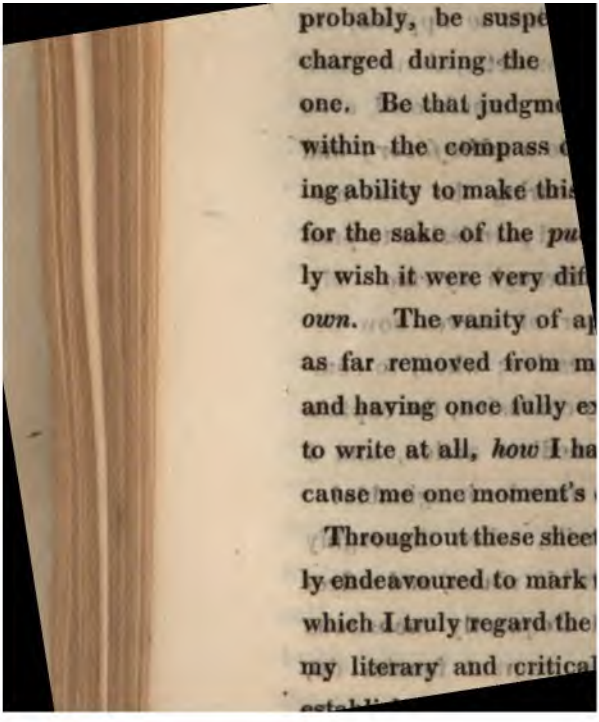
Unaccustomed for many years to such protracted orgies as those I had lately celebrated, I felt it necessary, contrary to my usual habits, to indulge after dinner that day in a short repose, and for that purpose took possession of the easy chair so recently vacated by the

good Lieutenant. Fatigued as I was in body and depressed in spirit, I had, nevertheless, scarcely thrown my handkerchief over my head, when sleep came to my relief; but whether the unwonted irregularity of the preceding night had disturbed the general economy of my system, or, more probably, the strange and very unwelcome burthen with which it was oppressed had disordered my imagination alone, certain it is that visions of a new and singular character swam in quick succession before my mental eye. Lieutenant Cloudcastle was, I thought, made on the instant a *Captain*, and appointed to the command of a vessel; as suddenly I found myself employed in tacking the added epaulette to his hitherto ungraced shoulder: I enquired the name of his ship, and, to my surprise, received for answer that it was called the *Medium!*

While remarking not only on the odd co-

incidence this title presented, but also on its unusual and (indeed, when *so* applied) informal placability, the epaulette, about which I was still busy, became transformed, even under my very hand, into a *white favor;* and Miss Cloudcastle, appearing the next moment at my side, requested permission to pass a morsel of *bride-cake* through my *ring*. My disturbance and tremor of nerves now became extremely oppressive; when, to complete the climax of my confusion, the captain was ordered into immediate action, and I awoke in the greatest disorder imaginable!

I could not but smile, when thoroughly awake, at my late terrible alarm, and reflect on those wild and frequently monstrous dramas in which our vagrant fancies do, through the hours of repose, so often make us the imaginary actors; but my thoughts soon seriously recurred to the unpleasant office I had so lately undertaken, which was,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equal readiness yielded to her desire; but, though I know it will offend Miss Cloud-castle's pride of judgment, truth obliges me to add, that *the widow knows better*.

As for the work in question, which I have perused with the closest attention, all I shall allow myself to say of it in the way of commendation is, barely what Mrs. McAnnal herself might most veritably advance upon the same subject: it contains nothing disrespectful to any church or state whatever, and consequently could not, in either of these important points, annoy, though it might fail to please, the most opposite opinions or adverse interests; while the sentiments it breathes, the morals it inculcates, uniformly tend to support the sacred claims of resignation, duty, humanity, virtue, and piety. This character is imperiously due to the obvious design of the writer: with what degree of taste and skill she has executed

that design, will now be canvassed by the free and legitimate judges of her art. For my *own* share, I must acknowledge my desire for the success of my little *Elève* springs less from estimation of its high desert, or sympathy in the *authorial* feelings of Miss Cloudcastle, than from the sincere belief of that success proving the happy means of reorganizing our now disjointed and much regretted *Coterie*. In these sentiments Mrs. Tendertear most cordially unites, since the loss of Mrs. McAnnal's society is felt at the *curate*'s in more ways than I should deem myself justified in here disclosing: *one*, however, in which I cannot avoid indulging a timid hope the *public* may possibly sympathise, I shall venture to explain.

Poor Mrs. Tendertear has been, ever since the cessation of our delectable readings, rapidly sinking into a state of nervous dejection, approaching, indeed, almost to desponden-

cy; for, afflicted with an inveterate *fistulæ lachrymales* in both eyes, she has long been utterly unable to amuse her leisure hours by reading, and, like myself, books constitute her principal source of enjoyment; but (from the reason I have before explained) no such indulgence as finding a reader of her favourite works in her otherwise highly attentive husband is to be expected; while *I* am personally unable to alleviate the rigour of her privation, in consequence of that terrible hesitation of utterance under which, as I have already intimated, I unfortunately labour.

Distressing, above all others (to a *woman*), as is my infirmity, I never lament this defect so keenly on account of the *unsexual preclusion* to which it subjects myself, as on that of the peculiar annoyance which the use of my tongue ever unavoidably occasions to others; but the Rev. Mr. Tendertear, to whom, the other day, I with much delibera-

tive effort contrived to express a part of my regret for the formidable disability which restrains me from meliorating the present pitiable gloom of his poor lady, assured me, that, so far from considering the incapacity I labour under as a *disadvantage* to any individual of my sex, he certainly would, if the admirable *vision of the mountain of human miseries* (as related in the *Spectator)* were to be realized, make an especial point of commanding Mrs. Tendertear to exchange her affliction for mine.

Whether the complaisant clergyman was entirely sincere in this assertion, it becomes not me to question: my commiseration of the sufferings of his gentle *better half* are genuine; and, thus influenced, as well as actuated also by my own particular inducements and exigencies, I do most heartily hope that *public approbation* of this little book may prove the felicitous means of restoring harmless

amusement to two simple, solitary, elderly women, by re-uniting to their society, and I also trust the renewed confidence and regard of each other, two more highly gifted females, who, wheresoever they may wander, will scarcely find elsewhere warmer admirers or truer friends.

Gentle Reader, your kind suffrages towards the accomplishment of this favourite hope are respectfully requested by

MARTHA MEDIUM.

INTRODUCTION.

DURING the sojourn of our brave military countrymen in Spain, in the course of the last war, many a female heart owned the potent influence of British heroism united to British graces. Donna Catalina de Ximenes was one of those fair and grateful Iberians who rewarded with their purity, loveliness, and wealth, the brave young Englishmen who had defended and preserved them.

We shall not, in humble imitation of several novelists and romance writers of our acquaintance, attend the beautiful Spanish bride through all the "hair-breadth scapes," "and moving accidents by flood and field," through which she followed the chosen of her heart

to his native land; suffice it to be here recorded, that Donna Catalina, the only child of a younger branch of the illustrious house of De Ximenes, was an orphan heiress of twenty-three, with a moderate fortune entirely at her own disposal, and that, previously to the final breaking out of the troubles of her country, she had transferred several thousand pistoles (the portable form into which she had prudently converted her estate) to the care of an old and friendly agent and correspondent of her family, a certain rich and trustworthy Jew merchant, long resident in Bury Street, St. Mary Axe. Her loved Clifton had been seriously wounded previously to the departure of his regiment from Spain; but, once landed on the salubrious shores of England, rocked in the lenient arms of love and peace, he soon regained his health, and, purchasing a neat little *domum* embosomed amidst the rich corn-fields, hop-grounds, and

cherry-gardens, of his native Kent, quietly sat down to rear a band of young recruits against the next war.

There was, among the little baggage which Donna Catalina had brought with her to England, an *old painting* in oil-colours, respecting the safety and perfect preservation of which she had evinced much anxiety and concern; indeed, next to the *miniatures* and the *hair* of her parents, it might have been considered as the most dearly estimated of all the few relics of her paternal home which she still cherished. On her arrival in London, she had commissioned her lover-like husband, who yet doated on her very commands, to have it carefully unpacked, cleaned, repaired, and placed in a new and massive gilt frame, partaking, by the style of its superiorly-carved symbolical decorations, in the blended characters of antiquity and affliction which strongly and awfully distin-

guished the heart-harrowing subject it was destined to enclose.

This picture had been, at their first settlement in Kent, hung in a small boudoir adjoining Donna Catalina's bed-chamber, in which were, besides, arranged a variety of somewhat heterogeneous matters;—a large silver crucifix, and her Clifton's plumed helm and warlike weapons, on which she still loved to gaze; some pensile shelves with books; vases of flowers; Clifton's flute; her own harp, and embroidery frame; and, as time advanced, the rocking-horse of her eldest boy, and the swinging-bed of her youngest, were frequent additions to the multifarious collection.

Here, when accompanied by her husband and children, would Donna Catalina often fence in sport, or read in seriousness; play to or with her eldest boy, or nurse her youngest; and here, also, when the partner

of her days and the pledges of his love were absent, would she sometimes reflect, remember, and *pray*, but never regret that heart-influenced choice which had condemned her to pray *alone*.

More than four years had now elapsed since the celebration of Donna Catalina's happy nuptials, during which (to the tender pair seemingly short) period, her husband had often asked her if she was conversant with the particulars of the melancholy circumstance which her venerated picture so expressively delineated: to those questions she had always answered in the affirmative; but, when still farther pressed for a participation of her knowledge, would evermore return some wide or evasive reply; till once, having been more than ordinarily urged to communicate, Donna Catalina thus addressed her inquisitive husband:—

"The story annexed to yon expressive

memorial is, my love, an old and a strange one, and is beside, though perhaps not quite long enough to serve the purpose of whiling away the listlessness of an Indian summer or the tedium of a Lapland winter, still, in *my* judgment, far too continuous as well as important to be thrown away upon a contemner of romance like yourself. Your children, who have a little Spanish blood in their veins, may perhaps, if *they* and *I* live long enough, appreciate its merits better; *you*, my loved master, a mere matter of probability merchant, are (nay, you cannot deny it) an utter sceptic to all romantic relations. While on the opposite side of the question, what *Old Verdun* the rhyming butler, in your play of *Lovers' Vows*, says of his poetry, *I* aver of my Legends, that they are all true: the information you demand might therefore, perhaps, lead to the first argument between us, in which I have ever maintained a pre-

decided and ultimately contradictory opinion to your better judgment."

Clifton, on these occasions, always yielded that triumph to his fair and playful tormentress (who, to own the whole truth, did love a little of the marvellous), which he could but acknowledge she had fairly won, since numerous had been his satiric sallies against her favourite taste; he was therefore always not only easily silenced, but also generally contrived to *appear* at least thoroughly mortified at the success of her retorts, though, indeed, his curiosity was in some little degree whetted by the embargo thus imposed on it, and he seldom failed to take the advantage of any hour of peculiar amenity in his Catalina, to again recur to the desired history of the *Family Picture*.

It was one of the loveliest May moons that ever rose, which shed its silver beams into the little boudoir, and lent their fairy

shadowings to the singular painting which hung full before them, when Donna Catalina (her waist encircled by her loved husband's arm, while one of her's entwined his neck, her cheek rested against his, and her married hand enclosed in that which had made her its own for ever) at last consented to render to his renewed intercession that confidence which her playful revenge had so long denied.

Estella;

OR,

THE FAMILY PICTURE.

PART I.

Chap. I.

In life, in youth, thy heart, thy hand, were mine;
Nor rests my soul in death till join'd by thine.

THE antient and noble families of *De Medina* and *De Ximenes* were," said she, "for ages the most devoted friends: frequent intermarriages had indeed, in former generations, frequently mingled the streams of their illustrious blood; when two more fair scions from those same time-honoured stocks pre-

pared to imitate the custom and almost nature-sanctioned usage of their predecessors, by twining in indissoluble bonds their marriageable branches: these were, *Don Carlos de Medina*, and *Donna Estella de Ximenes*.

For several years past, most of the family of De Ximenes had died untimely, either in early youth, or manhood's ripened prime: the then Count de Ximenes was, however, a fortunate exception to the fatality which had so long devastated his line, for he had already descended into the vale of years: his only and dearly-prized son, too, the heir of his proud name and fortunes, the handsome, gallant, and accomplished Don Alphonso, gave every promise of longevity, which a constitution the most vigorous and a formation the most perfect could bestow. Don Carlos and Estella were both younger children of their respective families; both lovely, virtuous, feeling, generous, and ro-

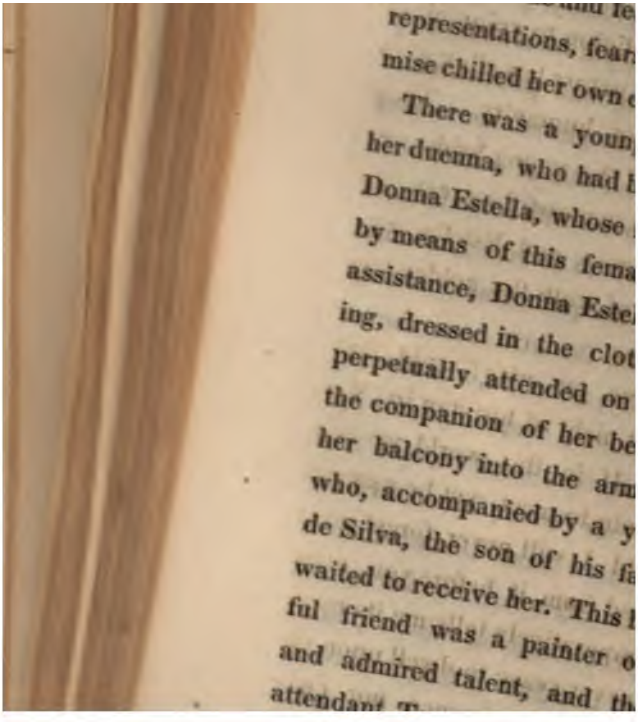
mantic, their mutual passion had more of celestial than human ardour: they had scarcely reached maturity, ere their tenderness received the sanction of paternal blessings; but both had previously vowed, before the sacred crucifix, to live either for love and for each other, or sundered to tread only devotion and austerity's brambled path towards that bourn, where the pilgrims of mortality at last rest together.

Don Carlos was little more than eighteen when he earnestly pressed his own father and the Count de Ximenes to consent to his union with the innocent and lovely Estella, then nearly two years younger than himself: the correspondent wishes of the silent and deeply modest maid were evidently expressed in her quickly varying blushes and the downward gaze of her lustrous eyes, which shot their sunny glances upon a bosom fairer than Alpine snows, but not, alas! as frigid. The

Duke de Medina, who was the happy father of three sons, absolutely repelled the idea of an union so premature. The Count de Ximenes was even more decided in his objection to this desired sacrifice to adolescent passion; and it was, by the heads of both families, irrevocably determined that Don Carlos should make the tour of Europe for three years, ere he might return to claim the hand of his betrothed Estella. But *love*, imperious, omnipotent *love*, smiled at the puny authority his will opposed, and power defied.

The young lovers were frequently permitted to pass whole hours together in private, and for the last days of Don Carlos's stay in Madrid, those delicious intervals were rather augmented than abridged. On their first interview, after the decided resolves of their fathers had been promulgated, Don Carlos assured his Estella the torments

his heart endured at the gloomy prospect of their approaching long separation could only be mitigated by the immediate possession of her hand, to which he implored her to give him the pure, the sacred, title of a *husband's* claim. Estella, who loved with less of sense, but perhaps even more of fervency, at first resisted, with all the unequal combat of duty and self-devotedness, the still more sacred remonstrances of pity, affection, and nature; but the fixed and gloomy despair which her denial painted on the fine, decided, and melancholy brow of her lover; his oathed resolve, which he now first communicated, never to obey his stern father's mandate of departure, but in a character which placed the possibility of accident or time's subverting their promised alliance out of the question, overpowered with resistless sway at once the strength of her arguments and resolves; she yielded to the impassioned re-



priest, who knew them but as humble citizens, the sanction of religion to enjoy all of complete felicity which nature has allotted to the attainment of poor humanity. Their return to the abode of the young bride was effected with the same successful secresy that had attended her egress, and Estella concealed in her bosom of truth the golden emblem of eternal union.

"Estella, my love, my wife!" said Don Carlos, on the last night of his stay in Madrid, "farewell! If in this world we are destined never again to meet, yet be assured that in this world I will never forget you; and if I am called from it before you, even then, my soul imperatively tells me its reminiscences can never cease to dwell upon the object of its earthly preference, nor completely enjoy even beatitude, till companioned by thine."

Soon after, amidst showers of benedic-

tions from both families, the young cavalier took his public leave of his Estella: there was a chill colder than ice on his pallid and quivering lips, as he pressed them to her trembling hand: there was a statue-like expression of despair moulded on her closed and immovable ones, which said, in silence, "We shall meet with a smile no more."

Don Carlos had scarcely been two months absent, when Estella became conscious to the symptoms of incipient maternity: to attempt to describe her horrible alarm and surprise at this most consequent yet hitherto totally uncontemplated incident, would be a successless effort. The first impulse of her mind, after it had partially recovered from the overwhelming shock it had received from the unfortunate discovery, was to fly from the dread presence of her father to the arms of her husband; but her only confidant and counsellor, Tereza, advised that, ere this

desperate step was resorted to, she should apprise Don Carlos of her situation, and submit the plan of her future conduct, either as to flight or confession, to the decision of him, who had now become the master of her fate. This counsel, more discreet than might have been expected from one, whose late rash compliances and approval had certainly aided the error of her lady, was adopted by the now wretched Estella; but, owing to the erratic course of her loved husband's wanderings, or some other cause, that momentous letter never reached his hands.

About this time, the brother of Estella, the gallant Don Alphonso de Ximenes, returned from a tour of pleasure to France, on which he had been absent some months, to Madrid: previously to his departure from Spain, his vows had been pledged to the beautiful Donna Seraphina, daughter of the Duke de

Infantado, and he had departed for France blessed with the promise of receiving her hand immediately on his return to his native country: but a heart-wringing disappointment awaited him. During his absence, the Duke de Infantado's heir, the brother of Seraphina, had died suddenly, in consequence of a fall from his horse while hunting, and his fair sister immediately became (as the presumptive heiress of her family) the *cynosure*, to which the eyes of all the proudest young nobility of the Spanish court were directed.

Hitherto, the attentions of Don Alphonso, the heir of the Count de Ximenes, had been received by Seraphina as an honouring distinction paid by the expectant of a wealthy and honourable title to a high-born indeed, but nearly portionless lady, whose beauty, if not appreciated and engrafted by some illustrious alliance, was doomed to wither within

the cold cloister's pale. Now the unexpected change in her fortunes elevated with themselves not only her father's views but her own: love, in her insensate heart, reigned only second to interest and ambition; and Don Alphonso's formerly acceptable and now renewed suit was repulsed by both father and daughter, and that so decidedly and so publicly, that Don Philip, the presumptive heir of the Duke de Medina, was encouraged to step forward as a candidate for the rescinded vows of the beautiful ingrate; and some highly flattering encouragement given to his devoirs at a splendid bull-fight which soon after occurred, both by the Duke her parent and herself, so inspirited his passion, that, utterly quitting sight of the antient and blood-cemented friendship of his house with that of the insulted De Ximenes, he instantly, with the full acquiescence of the Duke his father, made formal overtures for the hand of

the illustrious heiress of De Infantado, and was accepted.

From the moment this fact was incontrovertibly and publicly ascertained, the amity of the long-united families of De Ximenes and De Medina expired; and a black and fatal enmity between all their respective members succeeded to it, save in the breasts of two young and guiltless unfortunates, whose loves calamity was destined to darken, but never to disjoin.

The temper of Don Alphonso de Ximenes was not constituted to brook with patience and forgiveness the success of his ungenerous rival: he challenged young Medina, thirsting to bathe his resentment and revenge in the streaming blood of his love and fortune-favoured adversary; but it was ordained that success should hang upon the sword as well as the addresses of Don Philip, and he plunged his well-directed weapon deep into

the heart of his unconscious brother-in-law, who fell at his feet a corpse.

As the unfortunate Don Alphonso was incontestably proved to have been the challenger, and as it was also fully ascertained that the Count de Ximenes, his father, had not only been his confidant on that dreadful occasion, but also even acted as his second in the desired sanguinary vengeance on the son of their antient friend, the King's sentence against the young De Medina, for accepting the challenge, was mitigated to only a temporary exile from the court; while the despairing son-bereaved Count was condemned to perpetual banishment to a distant estate, situated near the sea coast, for the remainder of his days.

Chap. II.

ARRIVED at the castle De Ximens, the solitary scene of his punishment, the Count demanded from the now hope-deserted Estella a vow that she would never marry with the brother of him who had shed the blood of her's, and that she would pluck his memory from her heart for ever. It was not a selfish care for her own security that sealed the lips of Estella upon the subject of that irrevocable engagement which precluded the possibility of her obedience; it was not love for the babe, which already seemed to leap from her bosom to her lips, to deprecate the fatal confession; nor was it, at that soul-harrowing moment, even care for the safety and future happiness

of her adored Carlos that checked it:—No! it was filial love, filial pity, which barred with adamantine finger her ash-pale lips. She could not, by the acknowledgment of her rash and fatal affiance, add to the already insupportable anguish of her wretched parent: there was a black, a tearless fury imprinted on the heart, and reflected back to the visage of the Count de Ximenes, which threatened a revenge only less mighty than his sorrows, less boundless than his despair. He drew his poignard, and sprang upon his hesitating and trembling child, who, grieving more for him than alarmed for herself, most reluctantly acceded the desired oath, *that her hand should never be given in marriage to Don Carlos on his return to Spain;* but added, that to efface his image from her heart, and that heart's allegiance from its first and only love, was a command beyond her power to obey.

The Spiritual Director of the Count and his family, *Father Cherubino*, entered at the conclusion of this scene, and well was it for Estella that his eye of grace and presence of sanctity were permitted to prove the guardians of her otherwise precarious safety: he was a man of strong but calm and unaffected piety, of warm and tender feelings, and pure and unadulterated principles, and had long since, at an age when the blood runs high, chosen to turn away from all the invitations to worldly delights which a sanguine constitution and an affluent fortune offered, to serve his Maker in that mode which the tenets he had been educated in taught him to conceive the most acceptable. Father Cherubino beheld the desperate fury with which the despairing father regarded his equally despairing child; he judged, too, that her heart concealed a thousand-fold more anguish than her timorous tongue avowed.

He prevailed on the Count to permit her to retire; and then represented to him, that the weight of his own calamities and bereavements ought not to render him savagely insensible to the miseries with which the same calamities and bereavements had overwhelmed his lovely daughter.

"But a few weeks since," said the good monk, "you, my son, yourself gloried in, encouraged, and sought by all possible means to heighten, those very sentiments which now so unreasonably offend you, which now you so unfeelingly condemn. Neither your gentle daughter nor the unfortunate Carlos have committed aught why their entwined hearts should be thus miserably plucked asunder: but if the seeds of hate, malevolence, and revenge, permitted by the Almighty for the chastisement of sinful man to be scattered over the face of nature, *must* corrupt and overgrow the fruits of

love, kindness, and forgiveness; if hatred *must* still beget hatred, and vengeance its own hideous likeness; at least let the innocent sacrifices to their bloody altars be treated with all the lenity and consideration that circumstances will permit. Estella has just vowed never to join her hand in marriage with her noble, her affianced, her guiltless lover, because his brother has shed the blood of her's: in that promise alone is blighted all the summer hopes of her opening years at once; would you also deprive her of the recollection that she has, at least, once been blest? That is like putting out the eyes of an oppressed sufferer, and then condemning your victim to new tortures, only because friendly memory, taking the place of extinguished sight, will still in some musing moment present the primrosed plain of departed happiness on which his rifled orbs of vision may never, never dwell again."

The Count was silenced and awed, but neither influenced nor convinced, by the merciful remonstrances of the holy man: yet was not his arbitrary heart content with the half victory he had gained. He imprisoned his daughter in a drear and desolate mansion, called the *Casa Negra*: this edifice, which was of anterior antiquity to the castle, was situated on the utmost verge of the domain, and was, beside, a place whose least horrors consisted in its gloom, its loneliness, its damps, and decay; since it was also, by old tradition, affirmed to be the haunt of beings unearthly and unholy. There, attended only by her Duenna (whose love and pity for her charge could alone have mastered the horrors of superstition), and a dumb but sightly and healthy peasant girl, whose almost complete idiotcy defended her from fears the nature of which she could not comprehend, did her stern father command Estella to remain,

never again to see his face, till she could meet his curses of all the detested race of De Medina, with curses deep, unmitigated, and revengeful as his own; or, till she had worked a piece of tapestry, the subject of which he had previously caused a famous artist to design: this tapestry was to represent, in figures large as reality, the fatal duel of her brother and De Medina, whose shining steel the sister's handy work was now a second time to insert in the resembled bosom of her brother.

Yet was Estella happier, far happier, under this fearful doom of her father's, than human mind, that never knew such mighty ills as her's, can scan of; for her slight and sylph-like form was hourly enlarging, and she might now hide her altered figure from his piercing eyes, and those of all save that Being who, she was sure, would pity, whom she hoped might assist her: the terms, too,

of her durance rang like a peal of angel harmony in her ears. "Welcome! welcome my last living home, my last living employment!" she joyfully exclaimed, as she surveyed her allotted task; "Estella's form shall have mouldered to its original nothingness, Estella's soul shall have fled to await the audit of Him from whom it is derived; whilst thou, senseless woof, wilt still remain the incomplete memento of a father's completed sentence."

For hours would she sit with eyes of cureless, tearless anguish rivetted on the well-resembled features of her timeless parted brother, and, slower even than those heavy hours of her mournful imprisonment seemed to circle, did her reluctant fingers ply their never-to-be perfected toil.

The timorous terrors of the good duenna, on first becoming a dweller in this evil-reported prison house, gradually subsided into

a sentiment somewhat resembling security: not the slightest ground for alarm from supernatural causes occurred; and she would sometimes say that she verily believed the sweetness, humility, piety, and sorrows of her dear young lady were charms of potent power against the visits of the dead, and the illusions of the prince of darkness.

But when a few weeks of this gloomy and monotonous incarceration had rolled heavily away, her eyes began to rest with alarmed surprise upon the rapid increase of figure which was daily scanting the robes of her lady; frequent loathings, faintings, and other unaccustomed symptoms, too, occurred; and Estella, perceiving that her real situation began to be suspected by Signora Gregorio, considered that her longer silence would too probably render her virtue liable to misconstruction: she therefore, having guarded her precious deposit as long as it was hu-

manly possible, now determined to throw her desperate cause upon the mercy of her friendly *governante*. Signora Gregorio received her confession with horror: the instant, and most probably fatal, vengeance of the Count, should this secret meet his knowledge, appeared inevitably certain, not only to the wretched creature before her, and the innocent who yet formed a part of her being, but also to her own imprudent daughter, with whose aiding advice and abetment Estella had but too fully possessed her.

The duenna truly loved her fair and hapless charge, whom she had nourished at her own bosom, and felt a female's, nay almost, indeed, all a mother's interest in her fate: but she felt not for the safety of Estella alone; her own and that of her daughter was connected with it; and since the present possibility of eluding the Count's knowledge of this momentous circumstance appeared the

only chance of avoiding a calamity the most fearful, she instantly not only promised her trembling charge every aid and assistance in her power, and vowed the most profound and devoted secrecy, but also set her brain to work, to form arrangements calculated to ensure that oblivion she was so nearly interested in desiring. The observation of the dumb idiot, Luna, she thought it possible to evade; but to escape the piercing scrutiny of Father Cherubino, who was the only human being beside themselves permitted to look on Estella in her imprisonment, for any much longer period, she felt would be impossible. But Estella silenced her objections, though not her fears, by stating, that it was her fixed resolve to make the holy man, on his next visitation, a full confession of her private marriage with Don Carlos, and its consequences.

The dreadful tiding were as a thunderbolt

to the good monk: the deep and parental interest with which he regarded the event, in all its various relations, obstructed for some time the calm and benign flowing of his attempered passions: one moment denouncing to his kneeling penitent heaven's curse on filial disobedience, and by her own unfortunate example evidencing its unerring judgments, he denied absolution to her fault; but the next, straining her to his reverend bosom, he wept the tears of tenderest pity over her beautiful head, and silently wished that her haughty and unforgiving father's heart was tender as his own. The Duke de Medina, he reflected, possessed three sons, while the Count de Ximenes had been despoiled of *his* single hope, his darling heir; but, on the other hand, since Estella was now his only child, might not her offspring, if it proved a male, possibly become all

to him that Alphonso had been; and serve, in receiving his name and title, to fill up a vacuum so deeply, so dangerously resented?

Still the remembrance of the blood which would flow in such a youth's veins was a deadly impediment to the even imaginary realization of the monk's benignant theory; for, could he dare to hope that the implacable De Ximenes could ever forget that a De Medina had, almost with impunity, destroyed the last hope of his name, or, still less, be appeased for the injury, because a relative of the homicide had sprung up through disobedience, through defiance, through blood, to claim so proud, so distinguished a succession? Thus mentally argued the penetrative monk for his vindictive patron; and the final result of his ruminations was, to ascertain the vitality and the sex of the expected

pledge of a most unhappy engagement, ere he ventured to hazard a disclosure so important and so dangerous.

Signora Gregorio was the widow of a surgeon, and having once designed to make the obstetric art her profession, had, during the life-time of her husband, and under his especial instructions, made it her particular study: by means of this so providential knowledge of her's, the wife of Don Carlos was, when the hour of woman's most fearful yet dearest peril arrived, safely aided in her sufferings, and speedily hailed the mother of a healthful and lovely boy. Every article necessary to their support, and even the luxuries of life, were, by the Count's commands, liberally supplied to the prisoners by two lacqueys, always superintended in the performance of their duty by Signior Gaspar, the Count's confidential secretary, who was, on those occasions, entrusted with the keys of their prison,

while all interior offices and services were performed by the idiot Luna, under the direction and superintendence of the duenna, who always herself received the provisions and other necessary articles from the servants, with whom the idiot was permitted no kind of intercourse; nor were those servants, or even the secretary himself, ever, on any pretence or occasion, known to penetrate beyond the gallery door, at which, at stated intervals only, they discharged the duty allotted to them.

A long and dreary suite of upper chambers were assigned to the confinement of the hapless Estella; those were all so constructed as to open only into each other. The outermost, a large desolate-looking anti-chamber, was constantly kept locked, and otherwise secured by the two gaolers on the outside, and equally guarded by the female prisoners by fastenings on the inner one. All the win-

dows, which were of immense height from the ground, were likewise barricadoed with massive lattices of iron. The farthermost apartment of this range was usually denominated the *oriel chamber*, and was the sleeping-place allotted to the idiot Luna. Whenever Father Cherubino desired to visit the prisoner, his admission could only be effected by the express permission of the Count himself: the massive key was then applied to the anti-chamber door, and the ponderous bars which crossed it uplifted, while the two gaolers remained waiting in the gallery till the conference was ended; when the barriers between Estella, liberty, and hope, were again scrupulously replaced.

Equally strong and well founded were the fears of the kind duenna and reverend monk, that the cries of the infant would penetrate the ears of these attendants; but Providence had gifted the charming babe with

health and good humour so unvitiated and so perfect, and habitudes so placid and so regular, that, as circling weeks were added to its little life, their apprehensions, and even those of its tender and ever watchful mother, were lulled into security: yet still their internal difficulties were extremely formidable, for it had proved ultimately impossible to hide from the idiot Luna the addition their numbers had received. From the warm attachment this poor natural had conceived to the amiable Estella, the duenna had, for the first hours of her confinement, found it extremely difficult to restrain her from seeking her gentle lady, as she was wont to do, in the solitude of her own chamber: by dint of much pantomimic discourse, she had, at last, been apprized that Donna Estella laboured under a severe head-ach, which the least sound aggravated to intensity: thus instructed, the idiot, restricting almost her own respi-

ration, had lain patiently watching for hours at the door of the apartment of the invalid; but when, from withinside, her ears distinguished new and uncommon sounds, mingled with the loved voice of her angel lady in the low accents of extreme exhaustion, she *would*, she *could*, contain no longer, but, uttering a yell of amazed anguish, burst into the chamber, and, flying to the bed, no sooner saw, than she snatched and devoured, with wild and rapturous kisses and embraces, the new-born.

Signora Gregorio was alarmed at her transports, dreading that they might on some future occasion prove, by their violence, the unhappy means of discovering to their gaolers the important secret: treasured with such intensity of caution, and thrown off her guard by the keenness of her emotions, she wrested the baby from the embrace of the idiot with a resentful air, accompanying this most severe

deprivation with a blow; while the mother, between surprise and confusion at her violent entrance, and a dread corresponding with the duenna's as to the probable mischief her knowledge of their secret might occasion, instead of interfering in behalf of the silent and bewildered offender, as on all former occasions had been her invariable custom, cast on the trembler a resentful glance, a thousand times more painful to her than the corporeal correction she had just received; and, catching her child from the arms of the duenna, gazed around her with an intense expression of suspicious terror; then impetuously hid it in her bosom, and her own tear-streaming face beneath the bed-clothes.

Petrified with astonishment, fear, shame, grief, regret, and resentment, stood the idiot, with eyes enlarged, mouth agape, and arms extended, till a furious command from Signora Gregorio to leave the chamber made her

start as if a shock of electricity had been communicated to her torpid frame; and she silently stole away on tiptoe, softly closing the door after her; and for some days from this period she refrained from all intrusion, not presuming to enter the forbidden precincts without special command or invitation.

Father Cherubino condemned the course of conduct which had been adopted towards the idiot, and advised that she should, on the contrary, be treated with the utmost kindness, and even a guarded sort of confidence placed in her, by being frequently permitted to dandle the nursling in the presence of its mother or the duenna, avoiding, however, those periods when the gaolers were in attendance. At the very annunciation of this much-desired but despaired of indulgence, joy of the most vivid nature irradiated the vacant eyes of Luna; but when actually admitted to the presence of her lan-

guid lady, the sounding roof rang with her wild, imperfect, and incoherent gabbling: she danced the untutored measure of heart-vibrating mirth, and again and again the gentle baby was reddened over with her ecstatic kisses; but in her dogged and constrained submissions to the duenna, and henceforward sulky sort of devotion towards even her lovely lady herself, might long be traced the unforgiving remembrance of the past.

The child, who was by the good monk baptized *Carlos de Medina*, throve at the balmy fountain of his fair mother's bosom in health and loveliness; but that fair mother was fast withering beneath the unrelaxing grasp of an anxiety, which now began to wear the gloomy pall of despair. Nineteen months had her beloved Carlos already been absent from his native land, and not one letter or message had yet gilded that long

and gloomy interval with the assurance that he still existed. Tereza, the daughter of the duenna, and the confidant of Estella's marriage, had, soon after that event, been herself united to Leon de Silva, that faithful dependant of Don Carlos, who had in her company witnessed the inauspicious union of the young lovers: they had settled in Madrid, and it was through their hands that the tender-dissevered pair were to have held a private correspondence. Since the imprisonment of Estella, the good monk (commissioned by herself) had apprized those lowly but faithful friends of his being in the confidence of their heart-sick anxious lady; but, alas! no comfort had they to offer her: the nearest relatives of Don Carlos had not heard from or of him since he had embarked at Alicant for Genoa; and as the weather had, about that time, been unusually stormy, and many Spanish vessels reported to have

been wrecked on the coasts of Calabria and France, it was universally feared that he had found a watery tomb.

Father Cherubino now began earnestly to exhort Estella, as her child was already weaned, to consent to his conveying it secretly from the prison to the care of her's and its father's fast friends at Madrid, who waited anxiously to receive the precious trust. Its immediate protection and present safety once secured, he meant, with a quailing heart, to disclose the secret of its being, but not that of its sanctuary, to the stormy Count. The formal attestation of the marriage of the young pair, signed by the priest who had performed the ceremony, together with a slip of parchment on which he had minuted down the date of the child's birth, and that of its baptism as performed by himself, Father Cherubino enclosed in a small hollow leaden image of the holy Virgin, a relique of pecu-

liar sanctity given by the Count himself to his unhappy daughter on her fifteenth birthday: to these evidences was also added a rich gold brooch, set with a precious ruby, on which was engraved, "May you be as happy in your children as I am in you: De Ximenes." This jewel was also a gift of the Count's to his Estella on the same occasion.

Having soldered up the precious depository, the monk, while the lead was yet molten, impressed upon it the seal of the Monastery of St. Benedict; and then desired the duenna to sew the image into a shred of brocade, and suspend it as an amulet with the child's coral (which had been its mother's) to its waist. These important arrangements completed, the monk prepared to retire, conjuring Estella, as she valued her child's life and safety, to delay its departure no longer than the following evening.

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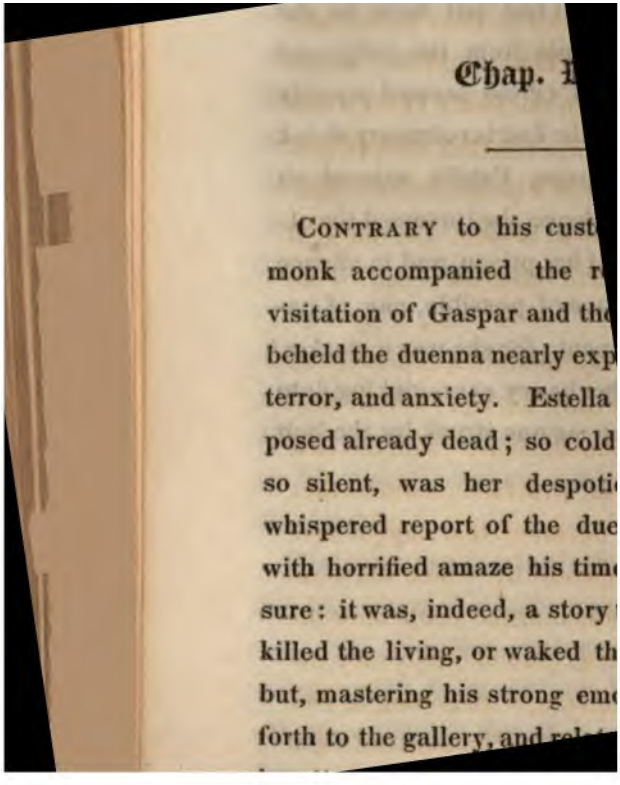
nal fondness, even by representations calculated to alarm its tenderest point of preservation; but as the period of his usual stay with the prisoner had been already considerably lengthened, he was constrained to retire without having accomplished the object of his humane and hazardous enterprize, though not, however, without hopes that more matured reflection would point to the fondness-bewildered judgment of the young mother, in lights the most forcible and convincing, the necessity of her ultimate adoption of his advice.

From the late affecting scene it had proved impossible, without provoking her loud and discordant cries, to exclude the idiot: she had witnessed the agony of the mother, the agitation and disappointment of the monk, and that sincere participation in their multiplied emotions which had flowed in streams from the eyes of the friendly duenna. Sub-

sequent events proved, that, *idiot* as she was, she had not surveyed those various emotions quite unobservingly. Ere Estella finally retired to rest, Signora Gregorio, who discovered that her lady's whole system was disordered in consequence of the late agitation her spirits had experienced, administered, in a glass of warm wine, a few grains of a narcotic medicine, the effects of which speedily produced a deep and calm slumber: she then, after a while contemplating the lovely repose of the innocent infant nestled in its parent's bosom, retired to her own apartment.

The next sun rose upon the completion of Estella's woes, her babe was stolen from her side, the idiot, too, was gone! No human being could have entered from the anti-chamber without demolishing its massive door, which was as strongly fortified with fastenings from within as from without, and

these remained secure and undrawn as Signora Gregorio herself had left them on the preceding night; while from the lofty and grated casements all egress seemed equally impossible. After the first involuntary shriek of maddening surprise, Estella uttered no more sounds: in silence she traversed the utmost boundaries of her prison, and in silence searched every place of possible, nay, of impossible concealment; for she was a *mother!* She then closed her heavy eyes, sinking into the duenna's arms, as one struck by the bolt of heaven.



Chap. I

CONTRARY to his cust
monk accompanied the r
visitation of Gaspar and th
beheld the duenna nearly exp
terror, and anxiety. Estella
posed already dead; so cold
so silent, was her despoti
whispered report of the due
with horrified amaze his time
sure: it was, indeed, a story
killed the living, or waked th
but, mastering his strong em
forth to the gallery, and rel

ing the alarming effects which that disappearance had occasioned to their young lady and her companion. The pallid hue of superstitious fear fell on the men's cheeks and lips at this most strange relation, and, tremblingly, Gaspar requested permission for himself and companions to inspect the range of apartments which had been the scene of an event so peculiar.

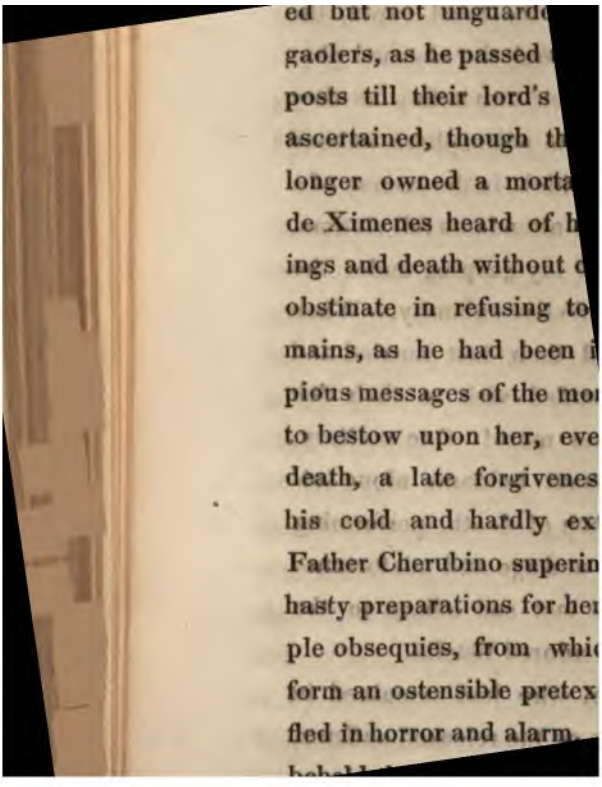
Their renewed examination was performed with a minuteness only inferiór to that with which the now unconscious Estella had quested before them: with fallen features they then unanimously declared, that naught save the supernatural agency by which the mansion was confessedly infested could have occasioned the accident. Shudderingly they departed, to communicate, with boding hearts, the dreadful story of the last eventful night to their imperious lord; while the monk requested to share the confinement of the fair

Estella till their return, which he desired might be expeditious, and attended by medical assistance, though he little trusted in the potency of human art to restore the unwelcome sense of suffering.

After a long period of total insensibility, Estella, at length, exhibited all the symptoms of a burning delirium; but the acute phrenzy of her inverted brain now happily dwelt on objects totally reverse to the event which had occasioned her distemper. Her child was forgotten, and every former incident of her past life equally obliterated from the tablet of deadened remembrance. Now she was a frightened leveret pursued by the sanguinary hounds, whose heated breath exhaled a fiery steam upon her palpitating neck; now a dying fish, that floundered in convulsive leapings against the meshy walls of her deadly entanglements; or as a new caught bird, beat out her hurried breath against the bars of her

imprisoning cage. Soon those restless ravings subsided; typhus the most rapid, the most deadly, ensued; and the alarmed physicians trembled for their own safety as they momentally inhaled the atmosphere imbued with a morbidity to which, in the course of a few days, two female attendants fell victims. The kind duenna still lay gasping under the crisis of the same infective calamity. When the physicians paid their last hurried and nearly preventive-stifled visit to their fair patient, she was no more! One solitary, superannuated peasant beldame alone tottered about the couch of death, performing with palsied hands, and age and misfortune-apathized heart, the last sad offices to the once brilliant, once adored Estella.

Father Cherubino, who had remained in constant attendance on the released sufferer, now commanded the nurse from the chamber, and, throwing wide the door of the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Father Cherubino superin
hasty preparations for he
ple obsequies, from whi
form an ostensible pretex
fied in horror and alarm.

morning leading the way from the Casa Niegra, the brothers of his monastery bore to the humble cemetery of the Nuns of St. Anastatia the once darling daughter of Ximenes, now forbid to moulder in the sepulchre of her ancestors!

Chap. IV.

"Tis piercingly cold, holy Father!" murmured Estella, as, awaking from a long and deadly trance, she sat up on a mat on which she had been distended, and beheld the monk praying before an uncouth stone crucifix which stood at her feet. Her garments were those of the grave; her lips trembled; and her teeth chattered involuntarily, as, in the dim and mysterious light which a half-shrouded lantern afforded, she contemplated with yet but half-resuscitated powers of perception, the dreary, damp, mouldering walls of the low cell in which she was immured. "Oh! where, where am I?—where is my boy?" she bitterly added, as the tide of returning

memory once more began to fill the forsaken chambers of her brain: "Was he not stolen from me by demons as I slept?"

"No, my daughter," replied the good monk; "the powers of darkness have no avail against the innocent: he is, trust me, under the protection of his father; but more rash questioning will endanger your own miraculously prolonged existence, and for ever prevent your now possible re-union with the objects of your anxious love. Be silent, be calm, as you wish their weal and your own."

Estella bowed her head in submission to the exhortation of her holy friend, and passively swallowing a cordial which he held to her lips, slept again. On her second awaking, she found herself companied by an elderly nun of graceful form, interesting features, and mild and conciliating manner, who presented her with linen, and the cloath-

ing of a female religious. At midnight a mantle was thrown over her shivering frame, and between the nun of St. Anastasia and Father Cherubino, who was in waiting without side the cell, she was led across the cemetery, and through several subterraneous passages which underlaid the convent, to a still more secret but infinitely preferable dormitory, provided with the indispensable requisites for accommodation, repose, and sustenance.

Here, frequently tended and for hours companioned by the pious nun and venerable father, her disease-exhausted strength was, by slow degrees, effectually renovated: hope, too, that all revivifying cordial, was by the good monk administered with prudent dealing, or vain had proved all other cares, all other aids: but when her constitution had surmounted the shock which terror, grief, and intolerable anxiety had wrought, and

she was constrained to listen to the cruel but necessary voice of truth—to hear that the same fearful mystery still enveloped the fate of her darling—and that the monk's ambiguous comfortings had alluded to the hoped protection of her son's *heavenly* Father alone, what then were her feelings? Reproaches of the most galling nature burst from her quivering lips, and, with curses too fearful for imagination to guess at, she banned the hour which had first given her breath, and even the holy man himself who had so wondrously preserved it.

Soon the inherent goodness of her nature, the placability, the patience, and the gratitude of her pious soul, resumed their angelic ministry. Humbled at the feet of her saving guide, she implored forgiveness, and a detail of the means by which he had rescued her from death's untimely shadow. The monk was of few words, yet, had garrulity been his

failing, his prudence and humanity would, in this instance, have taught him to contract into a narration the most limited details so revolting to the inherent instincts of existence.

"Daughter," said he, "after your convulsive agonies had terminated in a deep trance, the perfect resemblance of that death which it did but mimic, long after your other attendants had departed, I lingered about your deserted bed. An anxious and unaccountable nervous agitation hung on my aged spirits, which, though distinct in its nature from the grief and regret with which your believed untimely fate had inspired me, I still attributed to those same causes. I watched by you the remainder of that night, and early on the following morning sought audience of the Count, your father, for the purpose of reiterating in person my former often messaged entreaties, that he would, at least, pronounce

the farewell blessing denied to your dying struggles over the corse which could never more offend; I also besought him to permit the accustomed funereal honours bestowed on the illustrious dead of his race to mark the obsequies of his last heir. My daughter, I grieve for your grief; but sacred truth enjoins that you should know that your father remained to both requests inflexible. With a cold permission to see the body bestowed where I listed, I was compelled to depart, and had scarcely reached the Casa Niegra again, ere a messenger from the Count overtook me, with a command that it should be removed ere sunset. Immediately I commenced preparations for bearing you to the cemetery of St. Anastatia, but, reluctant to so soon consign you to the earth, I caused the coffin in which you were enclosed to be borne by my brethren into a small subterranean oratory in the cemetery,

intending to pass that ensuing night also in the imperious and salutary duty of contemplating untimely death, and in prayers for the forgiveness and reception of your eternal soul.

"While thus engaged, a slight sound, which proceeded from withinside your coffin, horrified, I will own it, my inmost soul. It was repeated! Heaven assisted me with sudden courage and presence of mind. I hastened into the cemetery, where lay instruments suitable to my purpose: I wrenched open with shuddering hands the enclosure of mortality: it was teeming with life; your eyes were unclosed, your heart beat, your pulses vibrated, and your hand was outstretched towards me. I blessed and glorified in thought the saving arm of Omnipotence, lifted you from the dreadful receptacle, and, throwing over your person the sables which had draperied the coffin, bore you in my

arms through darkness to a penitentiary cell near the oratory, whither an expiring sister of the convent had recently been, at her own desire, conveyed to yield up her last breath, and from whence I doubt not her pure soul fled her mortified body to eternal glory. Fortunately, the mat on which she expired had not been removed; a vessel, too, containing a powerful cordial, which had been prescribed to lull the excruciating agonies of her parting moments, remained unexhausted; and I had the happiness of seeing its contents produce the most beneficial effects on your newly-renovated being, while you sank into a short but refreshing slumber.

"Carefully securing the door of the cell, I instantly sought sister Clara, who is as myself: to her I related your wondrous resuscitation, and she hastened with me to your relief. Confide in her as implicitly as you do in me: she is *your* friend, because she is the

friend of the virtuous, the unfortunate, and the oppressed; and praised be Heaven for its best, its dearest gift, she is my own sister."

Here ceased the monk, receiving into his paternal arms the fainting form of the passion-torn Estella, by the tender aids of sister Clara, who almost immediately joined them. She was soon rescued from the friendly oblivion of overwrought feeling, and blessed and thanked her holy preserver with a fervour of gratitude which confused and offended his modesty and his zeal.

"What less charity, my daughter, could I, for my own soul's sake, have accorded you?" said he. "To have abandoned you to the fearful fate with which you were threatened, had been a deed of cruelty or pusillanimity below the customed level of human action. Be praise, then, given to God alone! And now, Donna Estella, that

you are advised of all it so deeply concerned you to know of the *past*, listen to my true sentiments on your *present* condition, and at least well-intentioned counsel respecting your *future* conduct.

"You are now as one already divorced by death from all human control: the coffin in which you were borne from your prison I privately loaded with some mould and stones from the cemetery, and carefully again reclosed, and your *supposed* body has been, with all solemn rites, committed to the earth. Your implacable father has carried his resentment for your but half-known dereliction from his authority even to the very *grave:* beyond that his jurisdiction fails; and Heaven has, in its wondrous care of you, in my judgment, declared its remission of your filial transgression, and its design to restore you to the performance of your conjugal and maternal duties. At present, to

all human kind you are still dead, save to two infirm and withering beings whose lips are closed as to your continued existence as closely as the earth now is over your imaginary grave. Your secret is safe in our bosoms while we *live*, and shall, if such be your desire, sleep with us in *death*. Seek, then, your husband, and take shelter in his protective arms; for '*whom God has joined, let not man put asunder:*' but if in life you may never more hope to meet him, then your days ought to be devoted to the service of that Power who has so wondrously prolonged them.

"But, my child———"

"Holy father! *my child!*" interrupted Estella, "your words glance not at *him: he is not*—Oh! too well you know *he* is no more!"

"By all my humble hopes of heaven's mercy," asseverated the monk, "his fate is as unknown to me as it is to you: once, indeed,

my thoughts glanced at your *father* as acquainted both with the mysteries of his birth and disappearance; but soon my reason, my observation, my intimate knowledge of his nature, repelled the error. I am his confessor; but were his soul even so hardened to the disregard of heaven's wrath as to reserve from the cleansing fount of confession the acknowledgment of a crime so leprous, yet have I such understanding of the workings of his soul's secrets on his features, voice, and manners, that I would pledge my existence on his entire unconsciousness of your secret. Your babe's disappearance is a theme of awful wonder, on which the contracted powers of my nature dare not dwell: human agency seems unconnected with it, while both religion and reason teach us to question the belief of that which is unearthly; therefore an humble and unconditional submission to the decrees of our

heavenly Ruler, and a lively conviction that they are ever *wisest, best,* can alone support your fortitude under the seemingly severe deprivations allotted you. Meanwhile, those dreary subterranean cells can no longer be considered as a safe or eligible retreat for you: the too probable discovery of your existence would occasion a renewal, nay, a fearful aggravation of all your former ills. But granted that you were *not* discovered, the preservation of your very being hangs on the worn and feeble threads of mine and my sister's, whose health is exceedingly precarious; while your hopes of rejoining Don Carlos must still continue to wither in ignorance, seclusion, and inactivity.

"Arise then, daughter of this world, and prepare thee, with an unshrinking heart and firm demeanor, to enter once more upon its busy, toilsome duties. Know that your good duenna is well recovered from the dangerous

sickness under which she remained languishing at the period of your supposed decease. If you permit me, I will teach her to laud the Giver of Mercies for your redemption from the grave; and well I know that her grateful and devoted heart will prove itself in the service of your interests, even to the sacrifice of life itself. She is dismissed from your father's household on two allegations: the first cause of complaint is, that the casket containing your jewels, which was deposited in the cabinet of the oriel chamber, has, since the disappearance of the idiot Luna, been missing; the second, but, in my judgment, principal charge against her is, that it is discovered her blood has mingled with that of a dependant of the Medina, a crime alone sufficient to exclude her from the future harbourage of your resentful father.

"To-morrow noon she sets forward for

Madrid, accompanied by her son-in-law, *Leon de Silva*, who has travelled from thence hither, purposely to accompany and protect the journey of the heart-struck and venerable mother of his wife to that city. Two leagues from hence, there is, as you well know, an hermitage: it is still inhabited by Father Chrysostom, that antient and holy anchorite, who has seen the children of the hamlet's children pass away before him: thither to night, when the moon has gained her utmost altitude, will I conduct you; and there shall you remain in secresy and safety, in his holy keeping, till your maternal friend shall, by my disclosure and appointment, join you. Behind Leon *(who has a special coursey)*, you can in a suitable disguise travel with ease and security to Madrid, where the humble home, and affectionate heart of your foster sister Tereza de Silva, will both be open to receive you, until heaven shall (if such be

its blessed ordination) restore you to your husband.

"Meanwhile, rest assured of my unsleeping fidelity to your cause. No clue within the scope of my inquiry shall remain unravelled that may tend to elucidate the fate of your child, and that of his reason-darkened companion; I will also sedulously watch the fluctuations of your father's conscience, the faint glimmerings of re-awakened nature in his disappointment-obdurated bosom, and the course of his mundane arrangements; nor fail to possess him, ere 'tis too late, with the important truth, that the genuine heiress to his wealth still lives to receive his remorseful forgiveness, and transmit his *blood*, if not his boasted *name*, to posterity."

A burst of hysteric tears prevented the immediate reply of Estella: when she could speak, it was to express her deep conviction of the propriety of the good monk's

ing, the wholesomeness of his counsel, and her readiness to pursue, in all things, the course his wisdom, virtue, and prudence, proposed. His holy benediction was bestowed upon the alacrity of her obedience, and the result of her destined travel: he then, with the pious nun, retired, leaving her in an agitation and confusion of mind which resignation was too weak to quell and even hope itself not forceful enough to cheer.

Sister Clara soon returned laden with the habiliments of a page, in which having assisted to array the trembling Estella, she placed a well-filled purse in her girdle, a relic in her bosom, and a rosary in her hand; then contemplating her fragile aspen form, and fair lovely features of speaking sadness, the fears of the false and dreaded world's thraldoms came strong upon her: she drew her to her breast of pure holiness, and, turning aside the clustering ringlets of her golden

hair, imbued her velvet cheek of pale rose tint with female friendship's pure and sacred dews; but, soon reposing nature's weakness upon nature's God, she turned tears to smiles, prayed for, blessed, and bade her farewell; then hastily retired, without trusting her newly-regained fortitude with another glance at the fair unfortunate creature, who, rejected even from sorrow's last and surest asylum, the grave, now prepared to wander forth at once an exile from all the rights of rank and fortune, all the ties and claims of duty, affection, and nature!

Chap. V.

It was late in the evening when Father Cherubino, entering the cell, apprised the waiting, weeping fugitive that the hour of departure was come. During the period which had intervened since Estella's hasty adoption of his counsel, he had visited the castle De Ximenes, and communicated to Signora Gregorio and her son-in-law, with all the caution the urgency of his errand would allow of, the wondrous, the thrice-welcome tidings of their loved lady's continued existence, and resolve of sharing their journey to Madrid. To the reverend anchorite, the worthy monk (fearful of trusting to the uncertain guardage of paper the precious

secret he held) determined to be himself at once the guide and herald of the daughter of Ximenes, who, born and educated at the castle, was personally known to the holy dweller of the hermitage, to whom her pious knee had oftimes bowed for the gracious benediction of patriarchal age, ennobled by wisdom, virtue, and religion!

Leaning on the arm of the monk, the disguised Estella trod the dreary subterranean passages of the convent, and traversed the cemetery of St. Anastatia, from which a small private gate, of which the monk possessed a key, admitted them into the lone fields by which it was surrounded. No mortal eye was on their course, which the lamp of heaven, fast rising to her highermost throne, illumined. Striking across a bye but well-known footpath, the monk led his young companion into the wide, wild, champaign country: few and sad were the

words of the fair Estella, as, with fear and anxiety-spurred steps, they held on their lonely way, while to those few and sad words her holy comforter still replied in terms and tones of cheerful encouragement.

Already had they toiled on, till within half a league of the hermitage, in silence and in safety; but weariness and languor hung heavy upon his age and her disease and sorrow-enfeebled frame; while the pale orb of night, conscious of the near approach of her splendid successor, gradually retired from the conqueror's path, and, her twinkling subjects fast receding in her train, left the vacated field of ether to exchange its veil of sober gray for the roseate livery of the herald dawn.

And now a shrill whistle sounded from the thicket which fringed with sylvan broidery their winding path, and a ruffian bandit, springing from its verdant ambuscade, ar-

rested with fierce commanding voice, terrific glance, and brandished blade, the steps of the way-lorn victims.

"Now, sir monk, your purse or your life!" cried the menacing villain, who grasped with one sinewy hand the girdle of the reverend man, while the other presented the glistening steel to his throat.

Previously to leaving the cemetery of St. Anastasia, the monk had taken charge of the purse with which his sister had, by his direction, provided Estella; this he now drew from his vestments, and presented to the robber, saying:—

"Unhappy man! whose life and soul alike will, I fear, become the forfeit of thy guilty lucre, leave, O leave, while yet time is thine, the evil of thy ways! Receive this coin, not as the foul extortion of thy dishonesty, but as the boon of charity: retire thee to repentance and to reparation, and leave the way

free to us, for our travel is earnest, and our errand of heart-drawn import."

The ruffian grasped the purse with joy-flashing eyes, but proceeded, with insolent daring, to examine the vestments of the monk for added food to his cupidity. At this moment he was joined by a companion, grim, fearful, and brutal as himself, who seized, with a clutch of demoniacal fierceness, the fear-paralyzed, fear-silenced Estella.

"Right, comrade!" growled the first villain; "do you search the whey-faced youngster; 'tis most probable Father Piety here has made him principal purse-bearer. Filthy mammon is, we well know, contaminative to the touch of holiness."

"True, brother," replied the other ruffian, whose sacrilegious hands prepared to execute the intimation he had received.

"Miscreant, hold off!" cried the agonizing monk; "the God of justice and of mercy, who

sees your acts and our truth, can witness to the verity of my oath, when I swear to you, by the majesty of his unspeakable power and the omnipotence of his eternal judgments, to which we must all come, that you already have all of wealth we bear about us. The purse you hold belonged to my young companion; I did but take the charge of it, and of myself have naught to tempt your avarice. Now hold, I charge ye! Oh! by all your hopes of heaven's remission for the past, rush not to added, to unpardonable crime!"

Vain were the adjurations of the venerable pleader, while loud and shrill as the rising blast of tramontane, piercing as the lone sea-bird's wail, rang the matron shrieks of the devoted Estella, whose view-violated bosom already throbbed in convulsive heavings beneath the sense-rivetted gaze of the ruffian despoilers.

"A woman! a *lovely* woman!" was reite-

rated in tones which told of horrors ere their birth.

With one swing the second ravaging bandit lifted her to his brawny shoulder, and, opposing the other to the rugged thicket, forced with his prey a passage to the glade it shaded.

"Now, by my soul's life," cried the monk (wrestling with his deriding detainer), "I will have thy weapon, or thou shalt have my heart's blood!"

Fierce and forceful was the struggle, but the powers of his youth were remanded to their long-forsaken posts, and the monk was victorious. Flinging from him the robber with a blow that momentally vanquished sense, he reeled and fell; while the holy man burst through the leafy screen in time to preserve the honour of his charge, by bedding the weapon he had so hardly won, deep between the massive shoulders of the violator. It penetrated to the cavity of the chest: he bounded

upwards with one short convulsive yell, and, vomiting blood, black as his purpose, fell back, and in horrible agonies expired.

And now the first, but transiently stunned villain, recovering perception and motion, darted to the scene of horror, and, seizing (while the monk was engaged in encouraging the sinking Estella) the weapon of his dead comrade, rushed on the soldier of his God, whose weakened arm began unwillingly to relax its late unwonted nerve. Again the heart-bursting cries of the wretched Estella rent the vault of heaven for succour to her defender; when a charger's ringing hoofs distantly sounded on the flinty way, while his rider's deep answering halloos, as he spurred, with windlike fleetness, to the aid of the oppressed, inspired with more than fiendish fury the monster, whose doubly impious purpose or punishment now hung on the balance

of a moment's breath. The monk gave ground, and, staggering from excessive weakness, fell, while the bandit, standing over him, stabbed, with a laugh of savage triumph, his now unresisting adversary to the heart.

Again the bosom of the now despairing Estella shrunk from the brutish pressure of a new destroyer, when the cavalier, who had dismounted, forced his way to her relief. As, when intercepted in his flight with the palpitating victim of his immolatory appetite, the fell robber of the fold springs with foamy fangs upon the avenging shepherd, so, loosening his hold of his outcry-hoarsened and nearly insensate victim, did the murderous ravisher rush to the assault of the intrepid intruder on his lair of crime: but ineffectual were his random and infuriated passes to defend himself, much less annoy, the cool but vigorous self-possession of his majestic

adversary, who, in a breath, wounding his sword arm, beat down his weapon and himself to the earth.

"Wretch!" cried the cavalier, "ask thy life, and devote it to repentance; but hope not to rise from that spot till thou hast pointed out the direction in which the *female*, whose piercing shrieks but now drew me to her aid, has fled."

It was a *voice* which Estella had never more hoped to hear; it was a *form*, which the faint light of infant morning now disclosed, which Estella's eyes had never more hoped to see: it was *Don Carlos*;—it was her *husband himself!* who had returned to rescue her honour, to restore her happiness!

Shuddering with excess of overwhelming transport, she in vain essayed to give sound to the mingling emotions of her soul; but, raising her despair-benumbed form from the cold bosom of her martyred defender, she

silently tottered towards her heart's lord, and reached him but at the moment, when, bending down to listen to a whispered request of the seemingly exhausted bandit, he received a stiletto, which the miscreant had secreted, deep into his side!

"Monster!" murmured the gallant victim, "my forbearance costs me my life, but shall no longer spare thine!"

With the surpassing force of unslacked youth's untimely death-grasp, he wrung the villain's suffocating throat, and, drawing forth the reeking messenger of fate warm from his own vitals, struck it through those of the assassin!

But death-dews were fast gathering on his own noble brow: he fell; and Estella, his *own* Estella, the spectatress, the *occasion* of his fate, crouching beside him, raised his head upon her knees, and, pressing hard her handkerchief to his fast gushing wound,

watched, with fixed gaze, the flitting convulsions which shadowed at quick intervals his beautiful eyes, and then, from his quivering lips of love-increasing power, elicited the fatal smile which mars the joy it mimics.

"Carlos! my husband!" she whispered, "is *this* our meeting, and you know me not? Must this be our parting, too; and will you not, for the last time, bless your Estella?"

Love, stronger than death, awakened the numbed powers of nearly vanquished perception: a roseate glow, the proper livery of the true heart's allegiance, momentally surmounted the pale flag of terrors; while reason, recognition, rapture, rushed to the unfilmed windows of sight to gaze a last farewell, as he murmured, "Estella! my adored! *here!*—What! met so soon, so strangely? that *disguise*, too! Oh, God! was it, then, my *wife* I saved?—saved but to *again* abandon, and for *ever!*—Oh! who shall *now* protect——"

He convulsively raised one hand; it fell powerless, cold; looked a long theme of anguish—groaned, and died!

Here the wife of Clifton paused, for she felt the warm tears of sympathy, which her story had drawn from the eyes of her brave husband, glide down her own glowing cheek. With a deep sigh Clifton drew her to his faithful breast with a fervid pressure; then, slowly rising, rang for lights, and, receiving them from the servant at the door, returned towards the *family picture*, upon which his tutored gaze now rested with heightened interest. The scene it represented was a wild sylvan glade; the time, the gray dawn of a heavy morning; nearly in the centre of the foreground, sat on the turf a lovely youthful figure clothed in the habiliments of a page, but the collar of the vest, rudely torn open as by force, displayed the unveiled sanctuary of a female bosom: her profuse and silken

ringlets, of a pale golden hue, "*dabbled in blood*," had escaped from the concealment of a large hat which had dropped near her, and were thrown far back by hands of peculiar excellency of form and colour, as if to permit the more undisturbed perusal of the face of a dead cavalier, whose body lay extended on the turf, but whose head she supported on her knees. Masculine beauty, to an exquisite degree of perfection, still marked the features of the dead, whose upturned expression indicated that the last glance of the now eternally closed eyes had been exchanged with those which still rested on them with a look whose mingled character depicted all that amaze, love, grief, and resignation, might be imagined to express; while from a deep wound in the left side of the cavalier seemed to gush a gory fountain, with which the draperies of both figures were deeply imbued.

Near them, and forming a principal fea-

room, where sandwiches and smiles awaited his arrival, it was only with seemingly unobservant gaiety that Donna Catalina chid him for so long forgetting that she was a *nurse*, and wanted her supper. The subject of the picture was mentioned no more that night; and Donna Catalina, remarking, and in some sort regretting, the deeply *penseroso* mood in which her legend had plunged her love, determined to give his feelings and her own memory a holiday ere she concluded it.

Chap. VI.

But Clifton's renewed entreaties, immediately after breakfast the next morning, succeeded in abridging the duration of his intended penance; and Donna Catalina, crying "Ah, flatterer! you have proved I can deny you nothing," thus proceeded with her tale, of which, without chronicling the various unavoidable interruptions it afterwards, to Clifton's great annoyance, received, we shall, for the gratification of those who may participate in his anxiety from this point, continue the unbroken narration:—

The sun had looked upon the sad sight the glade of blood presented for several hours, when the duenna and her son-in-law,

who had taken another and more frequented road to the hermitage, arrived there, and learned from its pious inhabitant, that the guests they hoped to meet, had neither reached it, nor even announced to him their design of coming. Surprised, alarmed, and goaded on by an uncontroulable impulse, the faithful Leon immediately returned towards the Monastery of St. Benedict, in that bye direction which the unfortunate travellers had chosen. A horse wandering without his rider attracted his notice; but, hastening onward, a voice, sweeter than human voice that ever yet was heard chaunting a requiem for the souls of the departed, broke on his startled ear: he knew it well, for there could be but one such—it was Estella's. He, too, observed and entered the fatally forced pass of the thicket, and beheld her employment and her company!

Astonishment and sorrow struggled for

mastery in the wrung bosom of this devoted follower, when he recognized the pale features of his dead master. To have met his loved patron living, would have proved the highest triumph which heaven could have awarded to his unswerving attachment; to behold him thus untimely levelled to the earth, was a shock which, for an interval, deprived him of pity, nay almost of vision, for the other victims of a calamity so extensive.

Starting, at last, from his trance of dumb and amazed sorrow, he knelt to Estella, and in accents the most soothing, the most obedient, besought her to permit him to conduct her from that scene of death.

"Never, Leon," she calmly replied; "never, unaccompanied by my love. Seek you the means to remove those sacred remains to the holy hermitage, towards which I was journeying, nor doubt my attendance. Nay,

good Leon, restrain that impetuous sorrow. If *I*, so newly, so wondrously re-united to my Carlos, can look upon him thus, and say 'Heaven's will be done,' surely *you* may look upon *me*, and say 'Woman, be *thine* complied with.'"

Leon shuddered, blushed, bowed, and obeyed: with trembling steps he resought the hermitage; but had proceeded only a few paces on the way, when the merry carol of contented industry, returning to its noontide meal, sounded near, and a cheerful band of woodcutters approached, to whom he communicated the dreadful catastrophe which had occurred, and demanded their aid in removing the bodies.

Soon these men cut from the thicket a quantity of boughs, with which, under his direction, they constructed two rude biers, and, bedding them thickly with foliage and wild flowers, they placed thereon the honour-

ed dead, and bore them slowly towards the hermitage. Estella, supported by Leon, walked close by her lord's side, whose dead hand her own, scarcely less cold, enfolded; while ever and anon her eye would stray from his form to that of her venerable defender, and then again be upturned with a glance which expressed that the patience it had besought was accorded.

The white cross which surmounted the hermitage was already visible, when the merry sound of the horn rang wide through wood and valley; the blithe chiding of the hounds was mingled with the sportsman's joyous halloos; and Echo, catching the gladsome notes as they floated past her secret cell, still reverberated their inspiring melody. The panting game, in view, scudded over the scented plain, while swift destruction menaced with flying feet and exulting shouts hard upon her death-measured track.

The hunters quickly followed, all save *one* noble horseman, who alone lagged in pace to peruse the mournful procession; and, staying his panting courser as it slowly wound its heavy way beside him, demanded to be informed of the accident that had occurred, and the names and quality of the sufferers: the enquirer was the *Count de Ximenes.*

Horror and alarm were in the visage of Leon when he beheld, and but too well remembered, the proud and implacable questioner, whose quick glancing eye had the next moment recognized in the retainer of the detested Medina, the humble confidant of his daughter's lover. Soon haughty rage dilated the lofty proportions of his time unbent form; his brow arched in contemptuous indifference, and he prepared to again give spur to his restraint-trembling steed unanswered, when Estella, drawing deeply

over her countenance her shadowing hat, and gently detaining his bridle, bent her knee at his stirrup, and, in a feigned voice and Moorish accented Spanish, thus answered for the trembling and now astonishment-rivetted Leon.

"Fell and sacrilegious murder, noble sir, sullied last midnight the peaceful covert of yonder shady glade, and dyed its velvet greensward deep in the streams of piety and of honour. Had it pleased the mightiest that these vile veins had all been emptied to save such a precious tide, a nobler, a holier tongue had this sad morning told the tale of an unmourned alien's death. But, woe is me! I live to bear a worthless being, purchased at a price which purest holiness, which truest knighthood, ill can spare.

"Last night, while I journeyed to join the fortunes of my honoured lord, the hands of the lawless and the cruel were lifted up against

my feeble form. Yon holy monk rushed to my rescue, and, interposing between me and perdition, fell a murdered victim to his own charity and my preservation. Oh! that there, at least, might end the deadly story! but fresh outrage, new alarms, again forced the cries of the oppressed to summon the avengers of injustice; and my gallant master, unconscious of knowing the being he protected, came, like the heaven-launched bolt of doom, upon the spoiler; but treachery wrought his fall, and he died for one who was not worthy to live for him! Yes; Don Carlos de Medina *died* for his *slave!*"

"Ah! sayest thou, boy?" cried the Count; "did he, then, die? Hold close my bridle. I would gaze upon the brother of that assassin who has made void my house's hope."

He alighted, and, with eyes flaming with revengeful triumph, looked long and joyfully upon the beauteous dead.

"Yes; 'tis his very self!" he cried: "Alphon-

so, my son, my heir, look down and smile; thou art in part avenged !"

He turned in demoniac exultation away, and seemed to hold joyous internal communing with his own satisfied reflections; but suddenly, his brow fearfully lowering on Leon de Silva,

"And *thou*," he cried, "dumb and conscience-stricken varlet, inform me what mission brought the daring Medina to my domains?"

Leon cast a terrified and imploring glance on his lady, and was preparing to reply, when Estella thus again answered for him:—

"The mission, my lord, was *love;* at least with such a character my young, and perhaps romantic, fancy dresses the haste with which my noble master, just landed on his native soil, journeyed towards the dwelling of her whose vows, ere he departed from it, your own approval had sanctioned and confirmed. Forgive his generous memory the commis-

sion of an unintended fault. Alas! he knew not that *blood* had bathed the altar of affiance, and obliterated the bond of promised faith!"

"Boy!" cried Ximenes, "I would the event of last night had been but a few hours procrastinated; your master would then have known that death, untimely death, has asserted the cause of outraged duty: he would, I tell thee, then have known, what thou, perhaps, wilt joy to think he never now *can* know, that beneath the unhonoured turf of the cemetery of St. Anastasia sleeps the rebellious daughter, the unnatural sister, whose heart carried with it, even to that unblessed grave, the image of him whose race has exterminated her father's name!"

Estella had hitherto wept deeply, but silently, during her father's speech; but her sobs now became unrestrainable, and the Count scornfully chid the expression of a sympathy,

which, by contrasting, seemed indirectly to accuse his own despair-armoured apathy.

"Now quit thy hold, and away, thou baby-eyed page!" he cried; "fit enchman for a beardless wooer: away! and hide thy brine-scalded lids beneath thy mother's biggin; 'twill fit thee better than a war-cap ever, I'll be sworn!"

"Alas, my lord!" replied Estella, "I *have* no *mother*, and, in truth, my *father* has no *son* in *me*. I believe I was born under a watery planet, and could be even well pleased to weep away, and number, by my tears, all my minutes to come on this side the grave, so they might find grace in your estimation to win my lord's lady love's ashes a resting-place in the sepulchre of her ancestors."

"Youth," replied Ximenes, "wouldst thou ask what only thy Maker and mine could demand and obtain, by cancelling the awful bond between us, seeing that it is by his name

I have sworn that her rebellious dust shall never mingle with mine?"

"Oh! then, my lord," cried Estella, "if that may not be, I will pray for your soul's forgiveness for that cruel oath, every sun I am permitted to see rise and set, to my life's end, so you will not die without inscribing on your child's solitary grave, 'Estella is forgiven!'"

As she spoke she hastily loosed her hold of the stirrup she had hitherto detained, and, bowing to the ground, covered her face, and remained silent.

"And who are you," questioned the surprised Count, "who would thus devote an unworn life to the toil of unsought, unappreciated deprecation? Did the dead serpent, who has left her sting still festering in my heart with *living* venom, bequeath to thee the charge of her championship? Wearest thou

her colours? Doff them, doff them quickly, boy: they are infective of disobedience, and will cause thy father's gray hairs to *curse* thee."

The voice of Ximenes faultered as he spoke; he spurred his horse onwards, galloped a few paces, halted, looked wistfully back, and again returned towards the mourners.

"Boy," said he, "uncover thy visage: I would look on't. Thy voice has ever and anon a note in it that pleases mine ear: it is, methinks, such an one as I would listen to through the drear watches of a winter's night, when wakefulness brings o'er the troubled mind the shadows of the past; for thou hast *tones* which almost echo back its departed sounds: haply thy *features* may also reflect again its withered semblances. Be uncovered, I *command* you!"

"Nay, spare me, my lord," replied Estella;

"I am no servitor of the Ximenes, and to do their pleasure consists not in my duty, but my courtesy; 'tis the Medina who alone claim my homage, my submission; and my blood shall all be emptied on this sod ere I will obey the bidding of the Medina's foe."

"'Tis fitly answered," after a thoughtful pause, returned the haughty lord; "and I must needs own I envy thy patrons a servitor so devoted; so do *request* the discovery of thy features."

"'Tis hard for me, my lord," rejoined Estella, "to deny to *you* request or even command, but to either my fate still compels a refusal which my heart regrets: but *I*, too, have an oath, rather to look on death itself than on the fearful eyes of an *unforgiving father*."

"Go, then," cried Ximenes; "go, to plant white roses and anemones around the grave of your young patron."

"My lord," said Estella, "that grave will, if mine auguries deceive me not, produce a vegetation more stately. Say, if from you bleeding bosom should shoot a lofty tree whose wide-extended branches shall reach to, ay, and even root them in, the resentful soil of the Ximenes, how, my lord, would you receive the intruders?"

"Thou speakest an enigma, saucy page," replied Ximenes; "but *I* will answer thee in *unriddling* verity. I would root up, then hurl the noisome growth away, to wither and to perish."

"But how, if many, oh! very many, years hence, deposited in his fair marble bed, my lord slept the sleep that wakes not?"

"Minion!" thundered Ximenes, in a fearful voice, "even from that deep-sunk bed should my glaived hand reach up and sever them!"

He walked his horse towards the bier of

the monk, whose visage he commanded the bearers to uncover. A mighty shock awaited him; they displayed the features of Father Cherubino; and the amazed and deeply regretful grandee felt, as he perused them, like one who, penetrating the mystic curtain of mortality, has beheld the eternal departure of his guardian angel.

The Count remained long in grief-abstracted contemplation of the body; while Estella, commanding the progress of those who bore the corse of her Carlos, hastened the conveyance of their precious burthen to the hermitage. It was deposited in the small rustic chapel which appertained to that antient building.

While the indefatigable Leon hastily departed for Madrid with the double tidings of his son's return and death to the Duke de Medina, the Count de Ximenes had countermanded the directions which his dis

daughter had given respecting the disposal of the remains of the holy monk: he ordered that they should forthwith be borne to the Monastery, himself following in close attendance till he saw them placed at the foot of the high altar in the church of St. Benedict. No human being in that monastery, or the convent of St. Anastasia, save sister Clara only, knew the purport of Father Cherubino's late fatal midnight errand; and it rested in the keeping of that gracious nun, who died of grief and regret soon after the interment of her sainted brother.

The fair page followed the hearse of Don Carlos, in the long train of funereal pomp, dispatched by the afflicted Duke de Medina to attend his youngest and fairest hope to the vault of his ancestors. To all the race of De Medina, to all its innumerous band of dependants and retainers, save the faithful Leon alone, did that fair page remain unknown;

and no sooner were the mournful rites concluded, than, ill-brooking or question or observance, the young and downcast stranger was seen no more in the halls of Medina: she departed from Madrid, for the domain of her banished father; and, heaven-conducted, directed, and upheld, ceased not her travel till she had regained the lone hermitage, where dwelt the age-bowed seer whose protection she sought, whose acceptation of her proffered service was the last remaining earthly good she coveted.

Well possessed by her unlimited confession, with each sad and strange circumstance of her story, the revealment of whose beautiful features could alone persuade him to still rank with the children of mortality, the venerable Chrysostom felt it were an impious, as well as vain attempt, to seek to draw the devoted soul and affections of the widowed Estella from the bent to which fate itself appeared to

have shaped them. Equally an outcast and an alien to her own family and that of her dead husband; at once a mysterious wife, mother, and widow; childless, and even supposed defunct, religion's ready extended arms seemed the most suitable, nay, the only sanctuary open to receive her. He objected not to the pious purpose which led her, pursuant to the counsel of her and his sainted friend, to devote all her remaining days to Heaven's service: it was the *manner* in which she proposed to fulfil that service against which he argued.

Estella desired to remain an inmate of the hermitage during her existence; but the hoary anchorite earnestly dissuaded her from a design which, on his dissolution, she might from then unforeseen causes, as well as the entire and obvious solitude and desertion to which she would be inevitably exposed, be perhaps imperiously compelled to again

abandon, and recommended her immediately beginning her profession in the convent of St. Anastasia. But Estella fervently assured her generous and holy friend, that she would never adopt a system which, by placing her liberty at the mercy of stated superfluities, would abridge the melancholy and dear-bought indulgence of passing more than half her life upon the very spot which was enriched by the heart's blood of her noble husband, shed in the defence of female honour and indiscriminating humanity.

Upon that spot, two lofty crosses, inscribed in the same ambiguous terms in which Estella had lately addressed her father, told also to the traveller the mournful story of their origin; and on the precise place where Father Cherubino had fallen, the Superior of the Monastery of St. Benedict soon after caused a small chapel to b

raised, and ordained, that in it weekly masses should be duly celebrated for the souls of the murdered. To this holy foundation (denominated the *Chapel of the Glade)* the Duke de Medina and the Count de Ximenes both strove to outvie each other in princely donations, a large part of which (with their permission) were by the good Superior devoted to the purpose of endowing an almonry, for the relief of way-worn pilgrims and sick and mendicant travellers: this almonry, though erected, for more conveniency of attendance, near to the monastery, was still to be designated and considered as dependent solely on the *Chapel of the Glade.* That lowly temple of Omnipotence was, when completed, consecrated by the reverend Superior; after which solemn ceremony, the holy hermit Chrysostom remained alone within it the whole night, praying before its rustic altar.

Chap. VII.

On his return to the hermitage, the venerable man immediately granted to Estella his hitherto denied consent to the object of her oft earnestly urged suit. "For to me, my child," said he, "it is now happily given to declare the Chapel of the Glade a sacredly safe asylum from the pursuits of cruelty and the alarms of danger: from this hermitage to that holy spot the path shall henceforth be free from evil doers; for in the heart of him who traverses it with a sinful purpose, the vile intent shall wither as soon as conceived, and the arm of lawless force, soon as upraised, fall nerveless. Within the forced pass of the thicket, never more shall

root of vegetation strike; it shall remain desolate and barren for ever and for aye. Nor shall the guilty only in desire pass into that blood-besprinkled glade without beholding even, with the eye of flesh, the grinning ghastly shades of the two murderous bandits, by whom that awful pass is perpetually sentinelled. No longer, then, do vain fears for thy sex, thy youth, thy loveliness, and thy helplessness, alarm me, for the spirits of the pious and the brave shall, besides, watch over thee, and that safety their life's blood won thee still remain their heaven-delegated care."

Estella heard with the pious thanksgiving of joyful and believing wonder; and, assuming the habit of a gray penitent, drew deeply over her angel face and golden ringlets its protective veil, and immediately commenced her daughterly ministry on the person of the holy anchorite and frequent much

desired devotional vigils in the Chapel of the Glade.——From a companion in misfortune of the noble Don Carlos, his father learned, that, late in the evening which preceded the fatal morning of his assassination, his gallant son had landed on his native shores from Algiers, where he had long been detained in hopeless slavery. During the passage from Alicant to Genoa, their small, heavily-laden, and ill-manned merchant vessel had been attacked by a Moorish pirate, of force so superior to their own as to make resistance madness; yet, owing to the undaunted courage of Don Carlos, a courage which, as if by magic magnetism, he transmitted to all around him, a resistance to the infidel spoilers had been attempted, during which the pirate had himself fallen beneath the young hero's sword: but with his dying breath the fell chieftain enjoined his only son, who was second in command of the vessel, to avenge his death upon

his destroyer by the keenest of all punishments,—secret, unmitigated, and ransomeless captivity. This vindictive behest the son had strictly obeyed, till himself falling in a subsequent engagement, the avarice of the next heir (who was a very distant relative) had not remained inaccessible to the promise of a noble ransome. Don Carlos was, at last, liberated, and, with a few christian companions in a small fishing vessel, he dared the dangers of the main, and those still more cruel ones of renewed captivity, to remove from the mind of his Estella that anguish and alarm which his long and enforced silence must have occasioned.

They landed on a part of the sea coast well known to Don Carlos, and not many miles distant from the summer palace of the Count de Ximenes; and, all untaught of the fatal accidents which had occurred to dissever the regards of that nobleman from his

house and hopes for ever, he had immediately taken horse, and rode all night, to unconsciously defend the honour and the life of his bride, and breathe his last sigh in her devoted arms. That heaven-upheld lady was now no longer seen to weep; all earthly interests seemed buried in her husband's grave, and when she looked upward, her soul-illumined glance told of hopes, of certainties, rested far beyond it on an immortal tenure.

The hoary-locked Chrysostom, who had twice numbered the longest period of years usually allotted to humanity, was at length fast drawing to the end of his vital pilgrimage; yet, though his limbs had never failed of their accustomed activity, his senses of their acute perceptions, or the divine spirit which animated his understanding of its subtility or its force, he still felt that the summons for his departure had gone forth, and sought, during the short and uncertain period

of his stay with her, to add to that fortitude with which religion had already steeled the heart of Estella. The possible existence of her child she had began to contemn as an illusion, whose indulgence was likely to prove, in a great measure, subversive of that perfect system of all human deprivation on which she rested her plea for divine forgiveness of that breach of filial duty which had so largely, so irremediably augmented the vial of wrath which it had pleased Omnipotence, in its inscrutable wisdom, to pour upon her devoted head.

Father Chrysostom rejoiced in this conviction of her hopelessness with regard to the possible recovery of her offspring, because he wisely considered doubt, anxiety, and suspense, as numbered amongst the most formidable temptations and trials of frail humanity; still he conceived his duty as not fully discharged toward his fair and hapless

inmate, if he left life without bequeathing to her a knowledge which, however seemingly unimportant, might possibly serve to throw some ray of light upon the wondrous disappearance of her child: he informed her, then, that his early youth had been instructed at the seminary which appertained to the Monastery of St. Benedict, whose library contained a collection, as he well remembered, of missals and manuscripts the most rare and valuable in all Spain. Plans, too, of many antient edifices, both civil and religious, were there carefully conservated, among which he recollected to have seen an original and remarkably curious one of the structure called the *Casa Niegra* (the late prison of Estella), which an ancestor of the Count de Ximenes, who was on the point of embarking on a distant voyage, had, on account of the important secrets which it was suspected to contain, confided for better security, to the

who placidly sets out on an unavoidable and long contemplated journey, well guarded against the perils and fatigues of his road, and assured of a permanently happy termination to them all at last.

Impressed with deep, but resignation-attempered regret, not unmingled with holy and exulting hope, Estella composed with pious care the reverend form; then hastened to obey the last commands with which its late flitting breath had entrusted her. Deep was the dismay and concern with which the brotherhood of St. Benedict learned of the recent beatification of the holy anchorite Chrysostom; and their tears, yet undried, for the deprivation of the sainted brother of their house, Father Cherubino, were mingled with those which now gushed forth, the faithful tributes of a new sorrow; while the sighs of the virtuous and innocent peasantry, whose steps the holy hermit had solicitously

trained toward immortality, long rose deep and mournfully from around his flower-besprinkled grave.

Faithful to her promise, Estella presented to the Superior the packet entrusted to her care by Father Chrysostom; but deeply, heavily, did she regret the compact by which she had bound her word to the soul of the departed hermit, to entrust with the dismal secret of her life and sorrows a new confidant. Yet the strictly enjoined confession was duly made, and received by the Superior with an amazement which chilled, for a moment, the life-warm fountain of his heart: he gazed on the lovely being, who, fairer than the fairest daughter of woman, kneeled at his feet, the bright, the well-remembered, the feature-attested heiress of the splendid De Ximenes, as, with white fairy hands uplifted, she besought him that a portion of the daily pittance of alms-bread,

heretofore allowed to the late anchorite Chrysostom, might still be continued to herself; and adverted to the vow which had already dedicated her young and innocent days to a solitude and constant mortification scarcely inferior to the strictest monastic penance.

It appeared less than an atom in creation to grant to such a load of undeserved, intolerable affliction, palliatives so poor, so worthless; yet they were all that might be accepted, and therefore the plan of the Casa Niegra was delivered, the bread promised, and the saint-like sufferer, first meekly begging a benison, drew her deep-shadowing veil over her face, and departed, leaving the almost adoring Superior in the attitude of imploring one for himself from the beauteous supplicant.

The plan of the Casa Niegra was peculiarly curious, as well from its remote anti-

quity, as from the beauty, elegance, and precision of its execution, its excellent preservation, and the extreme minuteness of its details. A written description of the dwelling, in the Spanish, accompanied it, the terms of which were extremely obsolete, and otherwise peculiarly difficult of comprehension; yet these difficulties formed but a minor portion of the mystery this antique plan presented, since it was, in one particular part, intersected by a whole paragraph of strange and uncouth characters, to all who had ever yet attempted to decipher their import utterly unintelligible. The most erudite monk of the Monastery of St. Benedict was unable to hazard a conjecture respecting even the *name* of this unknown language; and with a heart now afresh goaded by the intense stings of an awakened but unrelieved anxietude, Estella at length returned the inexplicable schedule into the

hands of the pitying Superior, who soon after restored it to its right owner, the Count de Ximenes, hoping his extensive knowledge, power, connexion, wealth, and consideration, might enable him to command, at last, the much-desired solution.

But, though the curiosity of the Count was whetted to the highest pitch by the attainment of this hitherto unheard-of document, which he doubted not contained a clue to the means of the idiot's wondrous disappearance, and that all the monasteries, universities, and academies throughout Europe were successively searched for literati competent to decipher and explain the mystic scroll, all the endeavours hazarded to promote that much-desired purpose proved equally futile and unavailing. The characters of the writing were, indeed, guessed to be hyperborean, but the language to which they belonged was generally believed to be lost to the

learned; and at the distance of many years after this useless research, the *secret* of the plan of the Casa Niegra (if any such it really contained) still remained wrapped in its original and impenetrable obscurity.

END OF VOL. II.

J. Denne, Printer, Margate.

TALES;

Mournful, Mirthful, and Marvellous.

BY

MRS. WILMOT WELLS,

OF MARGATE.

"I deprecate the cruel critic's stab."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND J. DENNE, MARGATE.

1827.

Estella;

OR,

THE FAMILY PICTURE.

PART II.

Chap. I.

Dreams! ye charm'd mirrors, that reflect the dead,
And weave new worlds round the lone sleeper's bed.

BUT far heavier cares than these preyed upon the mind of the desolated De Ximenes, the visions of whose nights were made the ministers of omnipotent displeasure: rage, fury, and revenge, had almost consumed the heart which bred them. Parched and adust with fury, it was the streams of grief and remorse which alone served to resuscitate its scorched functions, and

attemperate them to the accustomed tepidity of humanity. It had been his nightly prayer, ever since that fatal contest which had deprived him of his Alphonso, that the form of that beloved youth might, at least in *dreams*, be restored to his longing view; but never had the prayer been accorded, till some slight compunctious visitings for the fate of that innocent victim to his revenge, his lovely daughter, had by her own words, in the disguise of the page, been first awakened.

Now he frequently, in fancy's eye, beheld his son, but ever companioned, ever hand in hand, with the unfortunate Don Carlos: if he called upon the shadowy form of his son to condense itself into his eager arms, the vision uniformly motioned to present his inseparable companion for a first embrace, which was no sooner denied by the still revenge imbued Ximenes, than both shades would melt away from his aching view, save the anger-scintillating countenance of his beloved son, which, glaring from a drapery of dark enveloping clouds, seemed long to regard him with a reproachful and menacing air.

Some time elapsed ere the scarce slumbers of

the over-watched and worn Count presented any diversified imagery of woe: at length the memory-treasured form of Alphonso appeared, attended by a new companion, whose strong resemblance to himself awakened in the bosom of the wretched bereaved old man all a grandsire's tender, joyful pride. Smilingly did the pale form of his departed son approach to offer to his father's arms the new and welcome recreation of himself—rapturously did Ximenes seem to spring forward to receive him—when, suddenly, the features of the youth would change: it was the *lover* of *Estella*, it was the *murdered Carlos*, who lay clay-cold and heavily upon his shrinking bosom. Deep clammy drops would then burst from the throbbing brow of the labouring De Ximenes, whose anguished groans, unrepressed by the waking policy of his pride, would ring in the watchful ears of, and bring to his couch-side of anguish, Gaspar, his faithful secretary, whose long-tried fidelity and zeal were proved as much by the discretion and delicacy, as the ardour of his unwearied attentions. But though the lips of that devoted dependant remained for ever closed upon the

subject of his lord's nocturnal sorrows, the waking organs of several others of the household had also been occasionally open to and deeply alarmed by their patron's frequent midnight outcries; and the legends, which, from time immemorial, had devoted the Casa Niegra to the domination of unblest spirits, and the visitation of sights and sounds, superhuman and terrific, were now all revived. The distance of that gloomy dwelling from the castle De Ximenes had, at last, it was presumed, proved of no avail to longer guard that hitherto peaceful residence from partaking in the same demoniacal agency by which it was itself infested.

The unpitying manner in which the prejudiced Count had visited the deprivation of one of his children upon the other, whose tender life was supposed to have failed through despairing love and outraged, rejected duty, had, it was thought, by the simple and superstitious circle by which he was now surrounded, disturbed the rest of his good and aroused the malignity of his bad predecessors, to alarm his midnight pillow by awful manifestations of the immaterial world.

The oldest domestic in the establishment of the Count de Ximenes was his nurse, the aged *Uraca:* she now remembered a tradition formerly current in the family, that the *non-revealment of a certain death-bed secret,* which had long descended to the race of De Ximenes from father to son, would endanger the total extinction of the race.

"Now it is well known," said the nurse, "that the heirs of our exalted house have been only sons for several late generations, and also that the father of the present lord was slain in battle while very young, long ere his heir (*my* child, you know) had attained the first age of reason; consequently he had never received from his father the momentous and fated deposit: and what," she inferred, "was the result of this misfortune? Why, that the *line,* as heretofore foretold, was evidently in danger of total failure; for the Count could scarcely, in the list of probabilities, be expected to wed again: he was therefore himself, to all intents and purposes, the *last* of the race of De Ximenes; and it was no wonder the spirit of the Count his

father could not rest in quiet, and such an important divulgement remain unmade."

Two other antiquated oral prophecies were also rehearsed by this sybil; the first denounced, "*that, when the eldest of the Ximenes should do homage to the youngest of the Medinas, then the male succession was rapidly passing away;*" the second, "*that the new ruler should never enter in at the portal till marble stone revealed how he had gone out at the postern.*"

Time wore away heavily with the Count de Ximenes, whose days were all anxiety; but Providence, whose ordinations respecting him were not yet accomplished, permitted that the merciful veil of oblivion should once more descend upon his much deprecated and dreaded nights. Sleep again stole over his pillow, unattended by the romances of fancy either to ban or bless; and the once earth-contemning, all-sufficient grandee, whose prideful appreciation of his own various distinguished attributes of mental, corporeal, and worldly power, formed, at one period, his highest glory and most perfect

felicity, was now too blest to find (in common with animated nature's lowest, vilest link), his dearest good, his best security, in *unconsciousness*.

Fourteen years had passed away since the supposed death of the lady Estella, when the Count de Ximenes, attended by a numerous and splendid retinue, set forth one morning to take the diversion of hawking. The sport proved peculiarly felicitous and successful, and almost unconsciously drew him to some considerable distance from the castle, when suddenly his favourite falcon, refusing to return to the lure, marred the sport, and occasioned him both surprise and uneasiness. Vain was every effort used by his anxious train to reclaim the truant bird; and most reluctantly they were, at length, by the closing in of evening, compelled to return to the castle. The next sunrise beheld the anxious falconers, and their still more anxious lord, again employed in the same unavailing purpose in which they had exhausted themselves on the preceding evening; when the Count was suddenly most respectfully accosted by a peasant youth, who bore his falcon pla-

cidly perched upon his wrist. He instantly restored the bird to its noble master with a deep but signified obeisance, and was preparing to account for the manner in which it came into his possession; but pale as marble grew the cheeks of the Count as his eye rested on the countenance of the graceful restorer of his favourite; and swift as thought hied his heart's current to again stain with its deepest crimson that ashy cheek at sound of the young stranger's voice; for 'twas as that of his long-lost Alphonso, and the features, the tinting, and the form of the youth, all veritable prototypes of those of his much-lamented heir!

The adolescent vision of that regretted son's airy companion, so often, in his former torturing dreams, as quick reclaimed as presented, now indeed, stood embodied before him: it was not on the Count alone that the potent effects of this most surprising similitude fell; his whole train wondered with their patron; and, the silence of intent surprise growing painful to him who was its conscious but himself equally amazed object, he again bent to the chief, and turned to retire, but was detained by

the outstretched arms of De Ximenes, who, darting from his horse, snatched him to his bosom.

An action so uncommon, so unaccountable, greatly embarrassed the stranger: he blushed crimson deep at his detention and situation, and was, perhaps, the most astonished of the whole party, when he discovered that he had bathed the throbbing heart against which he was still forcefully held with unconscious tears! The Count, at length, relaxed his passionate pressure, and, in a voice tremulous from the excess of agonizing and painfully repressed emotion, condescended to apologize to the disconcerted youth for the singularity of his demeanour, by alluding to that wondrous resemblance he bore to his loved heir, long since numbered with the dead, which had occasioned his transports. Only with a bow, a glance, a tear, which, more than volumes could have detailed, revealed his sympathy in the cause of his late deportment, did the graceful peasant, in impressive silence, reply; and was once more on the point of departure, when the Count, who had not yet quitted the grasp of his hand, cordially and earnestly invited him to accompany him back to

the Castle de Ximenes. The fair youth unreluctantly acceded on his own part to the wish of the Count, but requested permission to first run to the cottage of his grandfather, hard by, to report, and ask permission to accept, the honouring invitation he had received.

Reluctant to lose sight of the amiable peasant even for a moment, the Count signified a wish to behold the rural abode, and be introduced to the relative of young Estevan (for he had enquired his name); and, commanding his train to await his return, was by the youth conducted to a simple but neat and convenient dwelling, embosomed amidst thriving and verdant plantations of the orange and mulberry. A venerable-looking old man, dressed in faded regimentals, with which costume, however, his perfectly military air strictly harmonized, was leaning over the cottage gate. At sight of the lord of the domain his white head was instantly uncovered in reverential obedience, while, with frankly respectful invitation, he requested the Count to avoid the noontide glare beneath the roof of his cottage. With an air of real gratification, the Count cheerfully acceded to the proposal of the

grandsire of Estevan, who did not notice the Count's still continued and strenuous pressure of the youth's hand, without amply participating in that wonder which had already so despotically exercised its sway over the minds of others.

The Count had scarcely seated himself beneath the rustic dwelling of the senior, than, rivetting upon his countenance his searching eyes, he demanded his occupation, his name, and more especially that of the *alliance* from which his grandson, young Estevan, was derived. This last requisition was made in a tone which emphatically told that *sincerity* was not only wished, but, from some private reason, authoritatively demanded.

"My lord," replied the veteran, "I am by profession what my garb bespeaks me,—a soldier: my only pursuit, during all my best years, has been arms. My name is Juan Gomez, and I am the only brother of Anthonio Gomez, an affluent farmer of these parts, lately deceased. Owing to an old and unhappy family misunderstanding no intercourse had for many years subsisted between myself and my brother; but, blessed be heaven! his long obdurate heart was

at length open to conviction, to reconciliation, and he *died* in peace with me, though he had not *lived* so, leaving me (being himself a bachelor) his sole heir. But 'tis only within the last month that I have, with my family, arrived at and taken possession of this pleasant estate, to which I have, by my departed brother's last will, succeeded.

"After my entrance into the army, I married a beautiful French maiden who attended on the young bride of my Colonel, whose life, soon after my marriage, I had the honour of saving on the field of battle, by exposing my own in his defence. My Colonel's lady and her attendant had both proved pregnant at the same time, and looked to be mothers in only a few days, when duty alike called the exalted and the humble husband from their tender sides. Grateful for her loved husband's preservation, Donna Antoinetta promised to protect her attendant, during the campaign, with a sister's care, and my offspring, whichever sex it might prove of, with a mother's tenderness. Alas! her pious promise proved prophetic. On my return from the war, she presented to me a female infant, lovely

as its mother, whose life had failed under the pangs of maternity!

"I will own to you, my lord, I could, at first, scarcely bear to behold the unfortunate little smiler, whose existence had been purchased by the wreck of all my hoarded store of earthly happiness. My lady Antoinetta and my noble Colonel both felt for my unnatural weakness, and excused it, convinced that the lenient hand of time would transform my present odium into my perhaps only future comfort. My child was, by their generosity, reared and educated in a style of superiority far exceeding the humble prospects of her birth, and correspondent only to the elevated natures of her benefactors and mine. Their auguries were soon fully verified: my girl grew lovely as the flowers of May, and my eyes once more dwelt with a new, a purer pleasure upon the renovated image of my still and ever-adored wife, whose name had been bestowed upon my charming child.

"Soon after my daughter had reached her fourteenth year, my noble commander fell, not on the glorious well-fought field, the fittest, the happiest death-bed of a soldier, but a victim to

a malady the result of unhealthful quarters and laborious service. My lady had long been deprived of her only child, a son born about the same time as my Blanche, and on that favoured girl her heart now rested with a fondness almost maternal. With the Colonel she had lost the last tie which bound her stranger heart to Spain; for, like my departed Blanche, she was by birth a Frenchwoman, and wished to return to her native land. She besought me, that, while I continued in the army, my daughter might be her companion; and, desirous of gratifying the wish of my ever-honoured commander's widow and the benefactress of my child, I waived a parent's tender claims on her society, and yielded up my sweet one to a temporary estrangement from my doating view. Blanche visited France, rather as the daughter than as the attendant of Donna Antoinetta, and I rejoined my regiment.

"Several years of hard, and I trust not unmeritorious, service followed, during which my dangers and my toils were sweetened, and more than recompensed, by the dutiful, sententious, and happiness-breathing letters of

till——"

The veteran suddenly paused; a deep suffusion crossed his forehead; while tears, spite of his strongest efforts to restrain them, rose to his aged eyes, which rested with mournful meaning upon the intently listening Estevan. With a heart-drawn sigh, he at length directed him to retire, and cull some of their choicest fruits for the refreshment of their noble guest. The youth instantly, though seemingly regretfully, obeyed the commands of his grandsire; and the old soldier, having followed his retreat with his eyes, softly closed the door, and, covering his face with both hands, remained for a short interval absorbed in afflicted silence.

Chap. H.

"My lord," said he, after a visible struggle with his feelings, "will pardon this interruption. 'Tis easier for an honest man to recount his misfortunes than his shame; but truth is a tribute I have never denied my equals, and I can pay no less to power. There is little more to be told: my child forgot in France her duty to her sex, her father, and her God; she yielded up her virtue to violation. A young Spanish cavalier named Don Estevan de Aguilar, a visiter of pleasure at Paris, seduced, abandoned her; and that unfortunate boy, who even now retired from your presence, is the fruit of her dishonour.

"It was from the Count de Luneville, the second husband of her patroness, the virtuous lady Antoinetta, that I received the fatal news; for that justly incensed benefactress, though I learned she still continued to assist and sustain my wretched daughter, had never, since the dis-

covery of her guilt, deigned to see or hold correspondence with or respecting her. For some months after the receipt of this dreadful communication, parental resentment, parental vengeance, effectually combated in my tortured bosom the latest yearnings of pity and affection, during which tempestuous period of my passions I preserved a sullen and unbroken silence not only towards my outcast child, but also to her still merciful protectors; but a dangerous wound, which I soon after chanced to receive in action, gave me ample leisure, on a long and agonizing sick bed, to repent not only of my own misdeeds, but render also christian forgiveness for those of others. In this amended state of feelings, I wrote letters of gratitude to the Count and Countess, and an affectionate invitation to my unfortunate Blanche to return to the shelter of my parental arms, which were now unclosed to receive her; but she dreaded to meet the silent reproaches of my stifled grief; and as I had been, by the effects of my wound, rendered incapable of farther service, I had no sooner recovered a partial degree of strength, than I

passed over into France, and brought to the repentant mourner a *personal* forgiveness.

"Alas! how changed I found her! Her beauty, her cheerfulness, and her health, had all alike fled with the pride of innocence. That boy, whom you, my lord, have deigned so particularly to notice, then scarcely a twelvemonth old, hung on her shuddering bosom, and was (with shame, perhaps, I ought to avow it) soon also pressed to mine. My lady Antoinetta had, as I have said, contracted in France a second marriage with a noble countryman of her own, but she did not, therefore, forget the devoted old soldier of her former lord: she loaded me with favours, and condescending explanations and soothings, far more precious than all the doles of wealth; but I needed no farther proofs that my daughter's error had originated not in her patroness's neglect of the inspection of her moral conduct, but in the fatal temptations of a first and uncontroulable passion.

"Donna Antoinetta was decidedly of opinion that the base cavalier who had wrecked my daughter's honour was a great nobleman in dis-

guise, but of this no certain evidence was ever obtained. I resided several years in France with my poor Blanche and her boy, for I confess I was, upon farther reflection, ashamed of returning to Spain with my increased family: at length the wish of restoring my child, whose health had been long slowly declining, to her native air, prevailed on me to revisit my beloved country.

We lived for a length of time in the vicinity of Madrid, upon a decent competency, which the liberality of my noble master, and that of his equally generous relict, had bestowed upon me. To Estevan, whom my poor Blanche had so named, after her seducer, I have endeavoured to give an education which, though far beyond his probable future sphere in life, is (with pride I repeat it) far, infinitely far, beneath the noble, the expansive, genius and capacities with which nature has endowed him. His personal attractions, all commanding and insinuating as they are, still form but the most invaluable part of his perfections; since his head and heart are both enriched with qualities which must deservedly render him the idol of all who know and

can appreciate his merits and his native worth; while his prepossessing exterior serves as a beacon to attract all manner of men towards a being whose intellectual endowments are constructed equally to deserve as to obtain their allegiance.

"I have long since discovered the superior deserts of my grandson, and would rather die a coward's death than excite his innocent, his indignant blushes, by revealing the shame of his much venerated mother. He believes himself the offspring of a stolen marriage, which ——"

The youth now entered, bearing a salver, on which were placed baskets filled with fresh fruits of the highest flavour, and a crystal vessel containing rich and ice-cooled cream, enwreathed around with gay and odorous flowers. With modest grace, he tendered his simple offering to the deeply interested grandee, who, graciously accepting a portion of the proffered viands, refreshed himself with a relish which had long deserted his more sumptuous entertainments. During the pauses of his refection, he enquired into the present state of health of the youth's mother. The speaking eyes of Estevan re-

plied to these condescending interrogatories by glances in which gratitude and filial love struggled with his fears; turning aside, he wept in silence; and the veteran, little less affected, informed the Count, in a low voice, that fell consumption was slowly but certainly undermining his daughter's life.

"She has," added he (in an under and emotion-broken voice), "received man's forgiveness, and, I do humbly dare to hope, heaven's also; but, oh! my lord, even *that* has proved insufficient to restore her peace, for well I know she has never been able to forgive *herself*."

"Innocent, hapless, vice-blighted lily!" half audibly exclaimed the Count: "at last, then, heaven's judgments on my house are justified!"

He then arose, and requested of the senior his grandson's company at his castle for the remainder of the day. The honouring invitation was most respectfully received and accepted for his boy by the delighted grandsire; and the Count de Ximenes, after intimating an earnest wish to be admitted to an interview with the invalid mother of Estevan on the following morning, bestowed a fervent pressure on the

hand of the wondering Gomez, and leaning on the arm of the youth, departed from the cottage, and rejoined his waiting train.

The Count, having bestrode his noble courser, Estevan mounted one which his grandfather had directed to be hastily prepared for his use, and, obeying the desire of the Count, rode on his right hand at the head of his following train, towards the castle De Ximenes. On the way thither, the Count, whose eyes were never weary of gazing on Estevan, or his ears of drinking in each accent of his voice, requested to be informed by what means he had become possessed of the bird whose fortunate flight had obtained for his master the acquisition of an acquaintance so amiable: gratefully and respectfully did Estevan acknowledge this compliment of the exulting Count. He then proceeded to state, that, while his grandfather and himself were taking together their evening's meal, the falcon had flown in at the open lattice, and perched, uncalled, upon his wrist: the inscription on its collar, he said, informed him of the title of its illustrious owner, but that the lateness of the hour had unavoidably precluded

restitution till that morning, when, with the approbation of his mother and grandfather, he had purposely set forward to restore the bird, whose expressive gestures, on view of the Count and his questing train, led him to believe that it beheld and knew its noble master, which an inquiry addressed to one of the attendants presently confirmed.

Every tone, every look, of his youthful companion, still more and more strongly confirmed the Count's conviction, that the impulse which drew his heart towards the youth, as the offspring of his lamented son, did not deceive him. The interpretation of his late visions now stood confessed: his Alphonso had risen from the dead to recommend to the protection of his despairing parent the living emblem of himself; and though that precious branch of a withering stock was of spurious growth, he resolved no exertion of which the brain, the heart, the power, or the purse of man is capable, should be wanting to nurture, to naturalize, to perpetuate the vigorous offset.

Their ride had ended ere the swift succession of the Count's thoughts had half revolved

through his agitated brain; and he only waked from a feverish, incongruous day dream, when the sudden halt of his mettled courser, and the action of his attendant equerry, reminded him that he had reached the grand portal of the castle De Ximenes, immediately over which a statue of Gonsalvo the Mighty, the *founder* of his *race* and *name*, extended, with a ruler's action, the truncheon of command, and still seemed to point to the immeasurably wide surrounding domain for his. The attendant train had halted and drawn up at some paces distance from their lord, forming a half circle behind him, till he should dismount; while from the interior, the almoner, the major domo, and other principal officers, approached at the head of a numerous band of pages and retainers to receive their master, who prepared to ascend the steps, beckoning the young peasant to follow him; when the *truncheon of marble fell from the hand of the statue of Gonsalvo the Mighty to the feet of Estevan!* and there arose a shout of amazement as the hollow marble, shattering like pottery-ware, *discovered a written roll of parchment which it had hitherto concealed.*

Young Estevan, stooping, directly disengaged the scroll, which he presented to the Count, who requested that he would, even on the spot, read aloud its contents. As he spoke, he replaced the parchment in the hands of the youth, who, unfolding it, read, in extremely antique Spanish, these words:—"*The death-bed secret of the race of De Ximenes.*" He paused, and the countenance of the Count fell; while deep astonishment, awe, and a curiosity the most intense, dwelt in every feature, and was manifested in every gesture of those around them. Once, with a tremulous motion, did Ximenes put the scroll aside; but the next moment triumphant fortitude assumed the sole monarchy of his bosom. "Yet read!" he cried (rivetting his piercing eyes upon the peasant), "for those features of thine do proclaim thee the heaven-appointed herald of strange events: read on, I say!"

Estevan thus continued:—

Chap. III.

Being a faithful Translation of the strange Characters inserted in the Plan of the Building called the Casa Niegra.

"Now behold there is in a certain apartment of that same edifice, called the *oriel chamber*, a large and magnificent cabinet of ebony; upon the folding doors of which, and likewise on the many drawers, recesses, and compartments which it contains, are figured divers ornaments of rare and cunning device, formed all of pure Corinthian brass: in the innermost and central part of the cabinet is, however, left a wide and lofty space, fashioned in the manner of a noble portal, supported by pillars of the same unique and precious metal, with which it is throughout so profusely embossed and adorned. The back of this portico is formed by one wide and massive panel of solid ebony, surrounded and con-

tained within a rich frame or cornice of the same substance as the before described pillars of the portico, the designs upon which represent angels, arch-angels, and cherubims, all of marvellous, rare, and artful workmanship, and in goodly shapes and postures most delightful to behold. Within the space thus divinely girdled and guarded is imaged and represented the Garden of Eden, the admirable cunning contrivance and disposition whereof riveteth all eyes that once do chance to gaze upon it, still to gaze with long and stedfast wonder; since there is delineated, as by the hand of nature itself, a most expressive abstract of all living and vegetative creation, more particularly the *Tree of Knowledge*, with its *fatal fruit* circled and entwined round about by the arch enemy of mankind; on either side of which may too be seen, figured, our first parents, those over-credulous spendthrifts of immortality.

"Now, mark ye! the semblance of the woman Eve holdeth forth a fair gilded *apple*, palpable, round, and swelling to the touch, which apple encloseth and concealeth a secret spring, upon which whosoever shall inflict a strong pressure

shall straightway behold the panel of ebony, upon which is figured the Garden of Eden, slide aside, offering free and easy ingress to a secret closet of stone, constructed and contrived within the thickness of the wall of the edifice. From that secret closet a steep and narrow staircase of many steps descends to the basement story; and at the foot of that staircase is a narrow door of oak, studded on the inner side with nails of brass, and secured also with three bolts of the same metal. That same door openeth under the covered cloisters of the garden of the Casa Niegra, which stretch along the whole extent of the back front of that mansion. Withoutside, the door is painted in the arabesque style, like unto the rest of the wall of the cloisters, of which it seemingly doth form a continuation, and that so artfully, that no human discernment has hitherto been acute enough to discover the mysterious outlet which it so faithfully defends.

"Now within that before-described strong hold of concealment (the stone closet) is deposited a coffer of black marble, containing a jointure for the last heiress of the house of

De Ximenes; *she who shall die in life, live in death, and whose story shall survive after both have ended.*"

Here concluded the scroll, which the youth once more tendered to the aghast Count, who, receiving, placed it in his bosom; he then bent deeply and involuntarily to the statue of his ancestor, and, remaining for a moment lost in deep and motionless abstraction, De Ximenes himself resembled the object of his homage; but, suddenly recovering his self-possession, he presented, with a smiling countenance, his hand to the young reader, whom he straightway led up the steps of marble into his halls of splendour, while the observations he had himself so lately vented on the lineaments of Estevan were loudly re-echoed by his whole household, particularly the aged Uraca, who, after gazing long and fixedly on the young visitant, declared her firm belief that all the antient prophecies on which hung the fate of the house of De Ximenes would now be speedily fulfilled.

Great was the amazement of mind which the late singular accident and developement occa-

sioned to the Count de Ximenes; but no circumstance, however commanding, could long detach the softer emotions of his powerfully magnetized heart from their new but favourite theme,—the acquisition which he conceived fate had bestowed on him by the introduction of the young Estevan, in whom he felt convinced he beheld the natural representative of his long lamented Alphonso, and the certain though illegitimate refutation of that very legend, which his appearance was erroneously believed to substantiate; for the fact certainly was, that the doating Uraca, and indeed the greater part of his establishment, believed that in the blooming peasant boy they actually beheld their young lord disturbed from his long sepulchral rest by the approaching childless death of his father, and the consequent extinction of his house's name; while the Count (as before hinted), from some private reasons of his own yet to be explained, was sanguine in the hope, that in the supposed *spirit* he possessed a living, a substantial treasure, no less precious than a *grandson*, the issue of his beloved Alphonso, whom, stead of the ominous herald of his name's ob-

livion, he trusted would prove the fortunate instrument of its proud transmission to latest ages.

Having devoted the whole remainder of that eventful day to the social and affectionate entertainment of his amiable guest, he himself, at nightfall, accompanied him till within sight of his rural abode, charging him with the pleasing office of presenting in his name, accompanied with suitable compliments, a superb rosary of pearls to his mother, together with an earnest repetition of his request for the indulgence of a short interview on the following morning.

Soon after De Ximenes returned to the castle, he retired to an anxious and watchful pillow; not to wonder at and reflect upon the singular chance which had, by so suddenly and strangely translating the mystic characters of the plan of the *Casa Niegra*, at once revealed the deathbed secret of his ancestors, hitherto denied to his knowledge, and directed his inquiry to an immense and unsuspected accession of treasure, but to muse with complacent pleasure on the natural and simple accident which had led to the dis-

covery of Estevan, and upon those arrangements which were unavoidably connected with the substantiation of the youth's identity, and his own consequent happiness. At length, having thought-worn the subject in every possible light and position in which imagination was capable of placing it, the Count's reflections referred to the extraordinary contents of the document of the truncheon. The deceased Estella was undoubtedly prophetically alluded to by it; her *heart*, at least, had certainly been widowed by her separation from her first and only love; and the jointure of Gonsalvo the Mighty could now only justly enrich him, her paternal heir: and on whom could he, with such heart-approving justice, bestow the treasure, as on the son of her brother?

It was, doubtless, an invaluable bequest, such as would alone render its possessor transcendently wealthy, and consequently powerful: the name of De Ximenes, though *descent* denied it, he could still bestow, by *adoption*, on the new and darling object of his hopes, cares, and schemes: and it was more than probable that the inherent valour and merits of his grandson

would, in the progress of a few years, carve him out a passage to distinction and renown.

"Let, then, my empty titles wither with me in the sepulchre," thought the sanguine grandee; "my *name* shall yet blossom in the male line; and Time, the builder up as well as puller down of honours, will fail not to refund with interest in after ages, to my posterity, the spoils of glory he will engulph in this."

Thus anticipated the Count; and Hope, well pleased with the devoted offering of her votary, herself gathered the poppies, which, with a late but liberal hand, she at length shook from her azure robe upon his feverish pillow. Soon starting from a transient though invigorating slumber, the Count hastily dispatched the duties of the toilette, and, without breaking his fast, rode forth from the castle followed only by his equerry, Manuel, whom he had previously ordered to be in early attendance, towards the cottage of Gomez.

Measureless was the surprise which this most unexpected and private *sortie* excited in the minds of the enquiring household: the sapient Uraca in particular was overwhelmed with con-

sternation, when it was discovered that her lord had still longer procrastinated the visitation of the newly revealed treasures of the Casa Niegra; and his early and mysterious airing, as well as total deficiency in a quality in which she herself so super-eminently abounded, formed for her an almost inexhaustible theme for expatiation.

"Had I," she cried (holding up her hands) "been, instead of my Lord Count, so wondrously instructed of a concealed treasure, would I, like him, have passed best part of a long day and a whole long night, nay, even booted, saddled, and set forth a wind hunting the next morning, without even so much as taking one peep at my good fortune?"

"Not you, indeed, dame, *I'll* be sworn," said the steward; "but, fortunately, our gracious master did not happen to imbibe your curiosity with your milk, or we might all, perhaps, be at this very moment under the immediate domination of Satan."

The nurse changed countenance, and crossed herself most devoutly.

"Nay, Signora," continued the steward,

"I would not willingly be guilty of the unpoliteness of alarming a lady; but what better could have been reasonably expected, had my lord ventured to penetrate to that strong hold of evil spirits, the Casa Niegra, unprotected and unsanctioned by the sacred banner of the church? Why, a whole river of holy water would scarcely serve to lay the unhallowed dust which has for ages been accumulating in the secret recesses of that infernal mansion; or ten thousand paternosters, aves, and credos, prove sufficient to even overawe, much less utterly quell, the legions of fiends and wandering ghosts which infest it; or as many censers of incense purify it of the brimstony and sulphureous fetor with which such abominable dwellers have pervaded and imbued it."

"I should rather think," said one of the damsels of the household, "that fasting, prayer, and castigation, ought to be adoped by our lord the Count ere he ventures within the gloomy walls which his inflexible revenge made at once the prison and the death-scene of his lovely unoffending daughter, the excellent Lady Estella, who,

they say, may be plainly seen, whenever night and morning meet, standing at the iron-latticed window of the chamber in which she breathed her last sigh, wrapped up in her winding-sheet; and then, worse than that, parading before the gates of the mansion, you are certain, at the self-same moment of time, to meet the shade of the brave and handsome Don Carlos, her faithful lover, with the steels of the ten cruel banditti who slew him, all sticking together in his bosom, and bleeding from as many trenchy wounds."

"Ah! but," cried the gentleman sewer, "I would venture to encounter the gentle spirits of both those true and ill-fated lovers, thrice sooner than I would the single stalking skeleton of the idiot girl, whom every body supposes was lost, and starved to death, in some of the secret subterraneous vaults which certainly underlay the foundations of that fearful dwelling, though no mortal has hitherto been able to discover entrance to or outlet from them: but it is credibly averred that her anatomy still wanders about, bedizened with the Lady Estella's jewels,

which you all know the poor discarded Signora Gregorio swore fasting, upon the holy Evangelists, she knew nothing of."

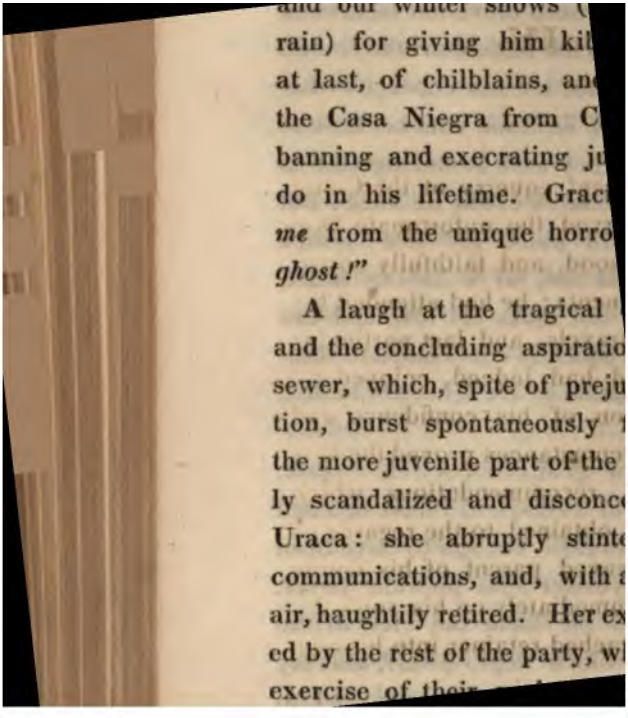
An involuntary shudder crept over all the hearers of the repetition of this horrible tale; and, though it was broad noontide, they insensibly contracted their circle, while Signora Uraca thus took up the discourse:—

"Well, to be sure," she cried, "'twas an holy truth which my honoured mother averred, when she used to declare, that, had I been a *man*, nought on earth could have put *courage* into me save curiosity; and the holy saints intercede for me in having given Satan such a fair pluck at my beard as I offered him even now, when I expressed a wish to enter that den of dreadfulness. Why, children, all you have been relating, awful as it truly is, is but cakes and confectionary to what I *know*, and could *tell* you, of the secrets of that fatal place, where is celebrated a perpetual *tertulia* of apparitions, ghosts, and goblins. 'Tis pretty well ascertained," proceeded she (lowering her voice), "that the *soul* of Don Alvarro de Rodriguez, who laid the foundation stone of the Casa

Niegra with his own hands (sometime about the reign of *King Bamba*), does not repose quite so quietly as that does: he was surnamed, from his ferocity and revenge, the *Knight of the sheathless Sword;* and truly his temper ran in his race, for tradition avers that, at the conquest of Peru, a descendant of his, a very valiant but cruel zealot, called Don Cæsar Sangre de Rodriguez, killed seventeen royal Incas with his own particular glaive, all for the sake of possessing their riches, and that, too, after they had embraced our sacred faith; and every anniversary of their murder they are permitted to seeth his body in a caldron of melted gold; and when it is enough, they sit down round it, and devour the contents even to the very *bones*. Then there's the wandering ghost of the Lady Beliza, my lord the Count's own great grand-aunt, who died under her father's curse, like the Lady Estella did: *she* too *loved*, even after her father had commanded her to *hate*. But she heeded not his bidding; she followed her cavalier to the wars in the disguise of a warrior (for she was a gigantic figure of a woman), fought undauntedly by his side in the battle's most furious heat, covered him with

her shield when he was overcome, and lost both her thumbs in his defence. After that, an ungallant rogue of a Saracen clove her left cheek across and across with his faulchion: the wound spoiled her beauty, but not her courage or her love's constancy. She returned with her hero to Christendom, where they were bound together as fast as holy mother church could tie them: but the Lady Beliza still pined for her father's pardon, and died, at last, of a broken heart, because she could not make her love and her duty agree; and her spirit is condemned to wander unblest till the name of De Ximenes be lost and found again."

"Well!" said the gentleman sewer, "*these*, to be sure, are fearful truths, and I have listened to them since I was little enough to have been served up under yonder olla podrida cover. But, heaven defend me from the view of the spirit of the ugly black negro dwarf, that my lord the Count's grandmother was reported to be so wickedly fond of, though he would never be persuaded to relinquish his heathenish superstitions, but ridiculed the mysteries of our holy faith even till the very hour of his death: he



and our winter shows (
rain) for giving him kil
at last, of chilblains, an
the Casa Niegra from C
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do in his lifetime. Grac
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A laugh at the tragical
and the concluding aspiratio
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tion, burst spontaneously
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ly scandalized and disconc
Uraca: she abruptly stint
communications, and, with
air, haughtily retired. Her ex
ed by the rest of the party, w
exercise of their

Chap. IV.

MANUEL, the present equerry of the Count de Ximenes, had served the unfortunate Don Alphonso from childhood, and faithfully ministered to his last moments; he had attended his master on his first travels, and last particular visit to France; and had, indeed, enjoyed no inconsiderable portion of his confidence and affection. These circumstances proved the best and most effectual recommendations which Manuel could have obtained to the regards of the doating and bereaved parent of his young master, who had, immediately on his son's demise, received his attached retainer into his own immediate service.

This confidential follower, the Count, during his ride towards the little domain of Gomez, took occasion to interrogate as to the course of his son's gallantries in France: the man,

somewhat startled, at first evaded the enquiring hints of his patron; but soon distinguishing, from the anxious solemnity of his manner and the purport of his questionings, that his duty to the memory of his late as well as present lord claimed his explicit confidence, he at length acknowledged, that, a few months previously to his departure from France, Don Alphonso had entered into a secret commerce of love with a beautiful damsel named Blanche Gomez, who attended upon a lady who had been the widow of a Spanish officer, and to whom his master had been introduced by a French nobleman, her second husband: he also confessed having borne from Don Alphonso to the beautiful Blanche several secret *envoies* of love, and various rich presents; and added, that his master had expressed much regret at finally abandoning her, by whom he was never known but as Don Estevan de Aguilar, the son of a Judge, of Toledo, travelling for improvement; but to the very probable circumstance of her consequent pregnancy Manuel could not speak with certainty.

The Count had scarcely completed his interro-

gatories, when they found themselves at the entrance of Gomez' plantations: he had from a distance beheld the approach of his illustrious visitor, and now came forth to receive him, followed by his daughter and grandson, upon whose youthful arm his languid and attenuated but still beautiful mother leaned for support. The Count's eye no sooner distinguished her features, than he drew from his bosom the miniature of a female set within a garland of lilies formed of precious oriental pearls, and, reverting from her countenance to that of the mimic resemblance it contained, became fully convinced that the fair invalid before him had assuredly sat for the likeness. The portrait had been brought by Don Alphonso from France, and had, on his decease, reverted with his other valuables to the possession of his father.

With ready good breeding, the Count now hastily proceeded to pay his respects to the elegant mother of Estevan, to whom he gallantly offered the farther support of his arm to assist her return to the cottage; and, purposely motioning Manuel to advance, he proceeded to give him some trifling commands back to the

castle, but was quickly interrupted by a piercing scream from the deeply-agitated Blanche, who having, as he hoped and expected, instantly recognized the features of the equerry, threw herself to his feet, which she embraced, exclaiming, in tones of deepest agony, "Oh! Manuel! tell me, tell me, I implore you, where is your cruel but ever-beloved master?"

The eyes of the much surprised and disconcerted servant enquired of his patron what sort of answer he ought to render to the grief-wasted but well-remembered mistress of his young lord, while high with joy swelled the breast of De Ximenes at the welcome confirmation of his hope's auguries; but, lifting with an authoritative action his finger to his lips, he waved his hand for the instant departure of Manuel, while himself assisted to raise and recover the unhappy Blanche, who had fainted.

By means of a powerful essence, which the Count fortunately had about him, she was speedily restored to consciousness; and between De Ximenes and her son, was conveyed back to the cottage, where she had no sooner arrived, than, in the most pathetic terms, she

implored the Count to allow her to converse for a few moments in private with his equerry; an indulgence which that polite nobleman, on pretence of not adding to her present agitation, insisted on deferring to the following day, when, on condition that she would endeavour to regain composure of mind, he promised her desire should be faithfully complied with; adding, that the person in question was utterly dependent on his commands, and should be forthcoming the instant she could with safety be permitted to receive his communications: then perceiving a portrait, which from a black riband was suspended to her bosom, he requested a nearer view of the miniature, which Blanche, not without some reluctance, granted to his importunity, when his eyes were saluted by a perfect likeness of his *son:* the setting also of the miniature was an exact counterpart to the style of that of Blanche in his own possession. He returned the portrait, dimmed by a paternal tear; and, without adverting to his own near affinity to the original, inquired, with a seemingly uninterested air, whether it was the likeness of her deceased husband, Don Estevan de Aguilar.

Blanche's white roses assumed a crimson hue at this most touching question; her lips trembled with inarticulate sounds, and her eyes, surcharged at once with the dews of penitence, grief, and shame, sought the ground. The excess of his own interest and anxiety rendered the Count both inconsiderate and unfeeling: he reiterated his question, and Blanche, in whose bosom pride, modesty, and sincerity, maintained a severe contest, at length, in a low voice, murmured:—

"It is, my Lord, the semblance of my long-lost, but ever-adored, ever-lamented, *De Aguilar!* my heart's first and only love! But not——"

Here articulation failed; a shower of tears streamed over her blush-burning cheeks; and, covering her face with her hands, she rushed from the apartment, to give license, in silence and in solitude, to the mingled and agonizing emotions which the sudden appearance of Manuel, and the rude ordeal of the Count's questions, had excited.

De Ximenes soon perceived that not even all their respect and veneration for himself were sufficient to detach the altered deportment of his

afflicted hosts from strongly expressing their alarmed surprise at, and anguished participation in, the distress and disorder which his visit had occasioned to their much beloved and already too heavily afflicted relative; he took, therefore, a kind and sympathetic but hasty leave; charging Gomez to present his warmest wishes to his amiable daughter for her speedy restoration to tranquility as well as health, and reiterating his promise that Manuel should most punctually wait on her the next day: he then returned, seemingly on the wings of the air, to his castle.

Estevan de Aguilar was the name of Alphonso's maternal grandfather, and was one of the sponsorial appellations which the Count had himself bestowed upon his darling heir at the baptismal font: it was the name under which his son had performed his last incognito tour to France; and, finally, doubt was banished from the mind of De Ximenes, who lost not a moment's time in summoning Manuel to a private conference in his closet.

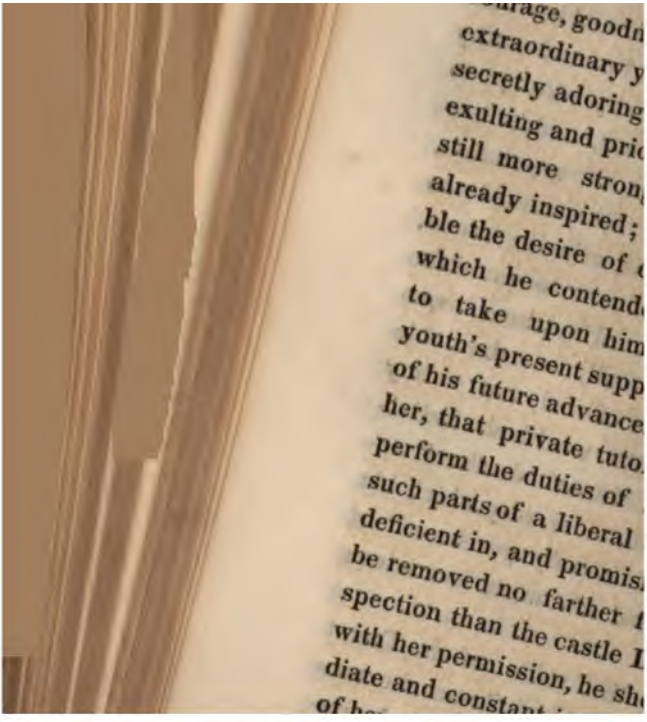
During this interview, he carefully possessed the equerry with the discovery which he had

made of a grandson in young Estevan, without seeking to disguise the rapture and exultation with which the acquisition of so dear but unexpected a blessing had inspired him; yet he strictly charged him to continue to conceal from Blanche, her father, her son, and all beside, the important secret, till he, the Count, should determine upon the means and mode of disclosing to themselves and the world the near affinity which subsisted between himself and the supposed son of the Judge of Toledo. Manuel then received instructions to inform Blanche, that, previously to Don Estevan's departure from France, he had quitted his service in order to enter into that of a nobleman who was about to return immediately to Spain, his native country; but that he had heard Don Estevan had proceeded on his travels to Italy, where he had, soon after, been killed in an affair of honour.

Immediately after this arrangement, the well-tutored messenger of sorrow proceeded to wait upon the eager and anxious questionings of the disconsolate Blanche, who listened to the tidings of her perfidious lover's fate with an anguish that sealed the slow but certain consum-

mation of her own. Time has little power over the affections of a sensible heart: the last ray of doubtful hope was now quenched, and her soul became dark and joyless as that last sad earthy chamber into which she earnestly desired to descend, there to forget her woes, and be herself forgotten! Yet the care of reputation, stronger than life's love itself, still remained: on her trembling knees, she, with wringing hands, implored the servant of her lover to guard the secret of her fatal error from all to whom it was still unknown, and, most of all, from the noble fruit it had produced: she offered, too, to buy his silence with all the little wealth she individually possessed. But Manuel declined accepting farther bribes for a secresy which his munificent patron had already purchased at a price which exceeded his most avaricious hopes.

After this scene, the visits of the Count De Ximenes to the dwelling of Gomez became frequent, and still more frequent were his invitations of her amiable son to the castle; so that Estevan might have been said to live almost continually under the Count's eye, save during



tage, to offer to them the accustomed tribute of his duty and affection.

The fondness of old Gomez for his grandson proved a fortunate auxiliary to the Count's favourite wishes: the good veteran was ravished with delight at the bright prospect which those honouring and providential proffers presented to his beloved but obscure and birth-blighted grandson; and not only yielded a frank and grateful consent to the proposed splendid transplantation of his daughter's offspring, but also prevailed upon that tender mother to yield her consent to measures, which, while her appreciative ambition desired, her maternal tenderness declined.

Apparel, plain but elegant, was now substituted for the customary peasant garb of Estevan, and thenceforward he took up his constant abode at the castle of his patron, who appointed him splendid apartments and suitable attendants, and procured several tutors of the most distinguished eminence to direct his various studies. These preliminary introductions to greatness adjusted, the Count proceeded, accompanied by the Superior of the Monastery of St. Benedict,

r, and several other ministers of the church, together with a numerous assemblage of attendants, to examine the long-guarded mysteries of the des liegra.

Chap. V.

THE interior of that gloomy edifice once penetrated, and all needful and solemn ceremonies performed, the panel of the cabinet of the *Tree of Knowledge* submissively yielded to the instructions contained in the schedule of the truncheon, and disclosed the entrance to the closet of concealment, in which was found deposited the alluded-to coffer of black marble: it was of surprising massiveness, and belted about with solid gold. On the lid, inlaid with inestimable chrysolites, appeared this inscription, "*For the last heiress of the house of De Ximenes.*" The coffer was unfastened, and filled with wedges of virgin gold and silver; it contained, beside, several diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and pearls of surpassing brilliancy, size, and purity. Whole days would have been scarcely sufficient to the reviewal and computa-

tion of this mighty treasure, on which De Ximenes bestowed, for the present, but a cursory view, and which he appreciated only as it presented the certain means of possessing, with even more than princely wealth, the hoped prolonger of his extinction-threatened race.

Straightway commanding the attendance of his amazed and eye-dazzled companions, who were well provided with lamps and torches, they descended the narrow stairs before described, and, forcing the thrice bolted door, which, though those fastenings were all undrawn, was still forcibly secured by a secret spring, they found themselves beneath the ruined cloisters of the garden of the Casa Niegra. No trace of human visitation or former culture was discoverable in what had long become a sylvan wilderness, from which the interlaced and entangled branches of mighty trees (the giants of their species) nearly excluded the rays of meridian day; while the usurping growth of noisome weeds and rank spear-like grass, with which the walks were thicketed and infested, rose, as in opposition to their farther progress, nearly to the breasts of the appalled intruders,

who, wandering amidst its almost inexplicable entanglements, with much scrutiny discovered, at length, a low postern, incased within the massive and wild vegetation-draperied garden wall: it had remained unfastened seemingly for years, but the embracing ivy, which had then, most probably, been torn from its adhesive clasp to give egress to some one, had long since renewed its protective coil with a redundancy which formed a perfect screen to the aperture both within and withoutside the wall.

The way, then, by which the idiot girl Luna had quitted the Casa Niegra, was, at last, ascertained; but the *means* by which she had obtained the knowledge of that way, a knowledge which constituted a no unimportant feature of the long and mysteriously conservated *death-bed* secret of the race of De Ximenes, still remained hid in probably fathomless obscurity. The Count, on retiring, ordered that the garden postern of the Casa Niegra should be closed, and the *secret* door which opened beneath its cloisters blocked up with masonry; and workmen were, with all possible expedition, employed to put his commands into execution.

The cabinet of the *Tree of Knowledge*, and the coffer of black marble, the Count caused to be forthwith conveyed to the castle; he also gave directions that the entrance to the closet of concealment from the oriel chamber, which the cabinet had so long guarded, should now be wainscoted in with cedar, to correspond with the other parts of the apartment: but though every means, both domestic and religious, were unsparingly resorted to, in order to repair, purify, and enliven the dreary mansion, and render it the future unalarming resort of human dwellers, the prejudices which had invested it with so many supernatural horrors lost, comparatively, little ground; and the disappointed Count was finally fain to abandon the unavailing attempt of rescuing the venerable and still splendid pile from that appalling obloquy by which it was contaminated.

Nearly four years had now elapsed since Estevan's first introduction to the castle, during which period De Ximenes had unceasingly directed all the powerful and still undiminished energies of his disposition towards rendering his intended successor completely learned, po-

lished, and accomplished; but to effect these desired purposes was, the Count soon discovered, ingloriously easy. Estevan had early been assiduously grounded in the principal branches of a plain but solid education, and a general and lustrous genius gave such rapid and exquisite finishings to his various new acquirements, as left the mighty mind of De Ximenes not a single desire or expectation respecting the perfection of its idol ungratified or unfulfilled: and his next proposed purpose was, to have him received by the world as that which he could never sufficiently regret he really was not, namely, his *legitimate heir*. His designs on this most important subject slumbered, however, for the present, in the innermost sanctuary of his own bosom; and he procrastinated their divulgement with the more confidence, because he believed their accomplishment would prove an easily feasible and therefore inconsiderable triumph of his policy.

But the all-sufficient statesman had yet a trial of skill to undergo, which was destined to prove to him, that the armoury of simple truth furnished weapons more effective than the hitherto unfail-

ingly subduing ones with which ambitious pride and sophisticating policy had supplied him. While the mind of De Ximenes feasted on the merits and praises of him who had proved the means of restoring his happiness, and who constituted his all of earthly pride, of earthly hope, the melancholy and slow-consuming mother had contemplated the wonders of the Count's unbounded affection and patronage of her Estevan with a delight which seemed to have prolonged her sojourn on earth only for the purpose of witnessing the complete consummation of her son's hourly increasing prosperity and exaltation: with even more exuberant satisfaction did the old soldier gaze with honest pride upon the deserved success of his beloved grandson; it was, too, a bright subject to which his aged eyes might recur for relief, when they should become surcharged with the natural dews of parental grief, parental bereavement, with which the now too evidently speedily approaching dissolution of his only child, his devoted Blanche, threatened to bedim them.

High as rose the pride of De Ximenes at each fresh and fast succeeding attestation of his beloved Estevan's mental and corporeal supe-

riority, it still irked his secret soul most sorely, that a chance-planted but real scion of the noble stock of De Ximenes was known and regarded but as a carlish graft: to remedy, in some measure, this mortifying circumstance had, on the first consideration, appeared to the too sanguine grandee an easy task. Could he but once condescend to own his affinity to the youth, the thorn, which beneath placid smiles still secretly rankled in his prideful heart, would be, he fondly believed, removed: but reflection taught him to know he had calculated too hastily. He could not, he recollected, aggrandize the blood of Estevan without debasing his own; still, to remove the stigma of either an alien or a base-born adoption from his escutcheon remained, he believed, in his own power: but he also felt, that, even were this last and loftiest vision of his brain realized, and Estevan's pretended legitimacy both averred and believed, the thorn must still rankle in his own conscious pain-devoted bosom; it could only be hidden, but not, alas! eradicated.

The rapidly waning health of the unhappy Blanche at length imperiously urged the execu-

tion of his long-delayed purpose; he therefore earnestly sought a private interview with that gentle penitent, and, in terms the most preparatory and cautious he could adopt, revealed his paternal affinity to her departed lover; adding a hopeless inquiry, whether the rites of the church had ever, even in any *informal* manner, sanctioned their connection; and, tenderly holding her to his bosom, concluded with an impressively solemn assurance, that it was the first and dearest wish of his heart to ratify to her, and to his grandson on *earth*, all that Don Alphonso *had*, or even *ought* to have, promised in the face of *heaven*, by making the former union of their hearts now fully valid in the sight and acceptation of man.

At this most amazing communication and proffer Blanche became the very image of death, and for several moments the Count entertained the agonizing belief that her tortured spirit had, indeed, passed the pale of human suffering: at length, as he bent over her, in wild undecided dismay, she once more unclosed her speaking eyes, and, rivetting them with a glance of almost more than mortal inquiry on his, said—

"My lord, I implore your gracious indulgence for a frail creature, whose nearly life-exhausted machine is powerless to sustain the workings of its already flight-fledged ethereal partner. Correct me, then, honoured sir, if I have in my infirmity misunderstood the purport of your late speech, and dare to embrace this noble hand as that of the sire of my departed Estevan."

Sinking to the Count's feet as she murmured these words, she snatched, with a convulsive grasp, his hand with both her's, and pressed it to her lips in silence.

"No, gentle sufferer," cried the Count, "you have not misunderstood my speech. *Your* Estevan was *my* Alphonso!—my *son!*—my *heir!*—my *heart!*—my *all!* You have restored to me his image, his second self: my blasted hopes through you once more blossom afresh upon his cold and early grave; and *your* son shall henceforth become *mine*, my *legal*, my *acknowledged heir!* You *are*, you *shall be*, my *daughter!*"

"No, my lord Count," replied Blanche, "*that now can never be*, seeing that the hand, the lips,

the will, that alone could have bestowed that honour on me sleeps cold in dust!"

"How!" exclaimed the Count, suddenly kindling into fury, "does the poor plebeian wanton Blanche Gomez *refuse* my alliance? Have riches, rank, reverence, *re-established honour itself*, no claims on her *acceptance?*"

Blanche started strongly, and recoiled from the Count as though a scorpion had infixed its sting within her heart. For one instant she regarded him with a gaze in which reproach seemed sublimed by contempt almost into divinity; but that character of feeling soon passed away, and with such a look as that which an examining and palliating angel might be supposed to assume, while scanning the black imaginings of a sinful soul, she replied,—

"My lord, I am *dying*—slowly but surely dying: my virtue, my duty, my peace, my health, have all long since been wrecked; and to such a bankrupt, riches, rank, reverence, seem less valuable, more evanescent, than even the scant portion of breath it needs to but accent their names. One, only *one*, alas! precarious trea-

sure is now my care; but if a heaven-ennobled youth's exaltation, a loved father's peace here on earth, may be purchased without farther enthralling *that*, say on, my lord, and become convinced that thirsty Hagar never imbibed so greedily the heaven bestowed draught of the desert as Blanche will your counsel."

"'Tis well," returned the Count. "Now answer to me truly: did my Alphonso, ere he humbled your honour, promise to become your husband?"

"*Yes!* (replied Blanche) he solemnly invoked the holy saints, nay Him, the everlasting Maker of us and them, to guarantee his vow, that, the consent of his father to our union once obtained, he would return to France, and, with all due and customary rites of the church, make me his bride."

"Good," cried the exulting Count; "heaven has truly registered that promise; and the tardy but certain moment of its performance is now placed within your own option and appointment. *I am his father:* I *do* consent to the union, and will straightway cause documents to be fabricated in which its celebration, twelve months

prior to the date of our Estevan's birth, shall be irrevocably substantiated. Do you still hesitate?"

"No, my lord," replied Blanche, "I do *not* hesitate. I am determined never to minister to your pride, Estevan's fortune, or even my own fame, by the commission or even the abetment of added crime. The only deserved dowry of my sin is *disgrace:* the heritage of its generous but unfortunate issue *can be, must be, disgrace* also; *undeserved* I will acknowledge, but not to be ransomed by the forfeiture of a guilty though repentant mother's eternal peace!"

Thus speaking, Blanche commandingly waved the departure of the abashed and amazed Count, and was obeyed with that prompt awe with which mundane calculation intuitively succumbs to those sudden and amazing gleams of the soul's divine qualities and character which not unfrequently illumine and disperse the murky and obscuring mists of human prejudices, policies, and crimes.

Chap. VI.

THE Count De Ximenes had quitted the apartment of the unhappy Blanche, and the dwelling of her unconscious father, with a tumult of ideas, sensations, and passions, struggling in his bosom, which, long after his return to the castle, continued to hold unquelled their conflictive strife. Resentment and indignation at the conduct of the superstitious conscience-cumbered mistress of his son, whose ill-timed scrupulosity had disarranged his fairest prospects, at first reigned predominant, but were, at length, surmounted and deposed by a sentiment equally strong and infinitely more just: this sentiment was, *amazement* how a woman so tenderly attached to her offspring as Blanche had evinced herself, and besides so equally tenacious of fame, could be at the same time so utterly devoid of that cautious and necessary selfishness

which would enable her to furnish herself with salvos at once the most satisfactory, and secure to both her interest and reputation.

At length he argued himself into a belief, or rather a hope, that her love of truth, and entire disinterestedness to all worldly bribes, temptations, and incitements, would still prove unequal to the task of bearing her out against that public disgrace which a free and general disclosure of Estevan's true origin would naturally lead to and produce; and, inspired with new ardour by the re-examination of his cherished purpose, placed in this new and more favourable point of view, he instantly seated himself at his scrutoire, and addressed to her a letter, in which he bluntly threatened that alternative as the certain and early penalty of her continued rejection of that late brilliant and unexceptionable proposal, which he yet once more tendered to her acceptance. Ere, however, he dispatched this peremptory epistle, a fresh suggestion offered itself in the form of a valuable improvement to his present scheme: he resolved to make Gomez himself the confidant of the important secret of his affinity and present de-

terminations; a measure, which could not fail of providing in the veteran a staunch and effective auxiliary to his purpose.

Of Blanche's filial devotion he was convinced; and assailed at once by parental authority and menaced shame (placing even all the latent workings of maternal tenderness and ambition out of the question), he feared not the being, at last, enabled to effect that victory over conscience, which could alone make his natural property and interest in her son a good in which his *pride* might (though secretly, in a diminished degree), partake of solace with his *affection*.

Gomez was then hastily summoned, and as hastily entrusted with the mystery which had proved the real source of his beloved boy's so sudden and surprising elevation. The good man was, at first, petrified with astonishment; but the deep and unfading resentment with which he had invariably regarded the memory of the unknown seducer and slow but certain destroyer of his only child, soon regained its habitual buoyancy in his mind: his eye flashed with unwonted fires, and his withered hand mechanically pressed his trusty and still undiscarded blade;

but the nobly reparative offer to his unhappy daughter with which the Count instantly followed up his strange disclosure, more than appeased the injured honour of the time-bowed veteran, whose tears, more emphatically than his words, at once acknowledged its munificence and heartfelt appreciation.

It was her father whom the Count made the bearer of his lately written letter, which Blanche perused with the same unaltered determination which had inspired her late denial. Her much-loved parent's representations, and even commands, were equally unfruitful and ineffective.

"My father," said she, "that very provisional promise of Don Alphonso's, on pretence of which the Count would now presume to *mock*, by *forging* them, the ordinances of heaven, was grounded on and given in proposed intentional *deceit*. He represented his father, in a *false* character, as a Judge of Toledo: that even such a *reverend dignitary of the law* would give his consent to a compact so unequal, blurred too and disgraced by crime, was unlikely. The sanction, then, of the *proud* and *princely De Ximenes* to such an engagement was most probably as

little intended to be ever *solicited* as it could be reasonably expected to be *attained*. Besides, the history of the unfortunate young nobleman's previous life and dreadful death, of both which I have, since my residence in this neighbourhood, become but too fully learned, fatally prove that, *previously* to his visit to France, not only his *heart*, but his *hand*, were devoted, promised to *another*, an adequate object, the lovely Seraphina, daughter of the Duke de Infantado; to revenge whose ambitious infidelity to their former reciprocal vows, he died upon the sword's point of his successful rival. Is it not, then (alas! for his soul's rest), all too sure that the wishes, the intents of the dead, would be *violated*, not *fulfilled*, in the proposed political and *sacrilegious* fabrication? Finally, were I even convinced that your malediction, my father, would mingle with my last sad sigh, I would still glory in my refusal; arming my parting soul with the conviction, that it was about to seek the footstool of its Judge unsoiled, at least, by new, by avoidable offence."

Gomez had entered the presence of his child in the character of an admonisher; he quitted

it in that of a convert; and, having communicated to the Count the result of his embassy, awaited in silence and distant reserve the threatened launch of that bolt of shame, which, while it failed not to blast the drooping mother, would, he justly feared, blight also in its murderous path all the fair blossoms of promise which adorned the youth of her noble-minded son. It was a fear nearly allied to that of the veteran which still chained in indecision the lips of the proud and disappointment-raging Count.

Accustomed, even at this early period, to venerate as well as admire the rightly constituted mind of Estevan, he doubted whether an acknowledgment of affinity linked to one of bastardy might be productive of more good or gratification to him than a draught of poison from a gem-decked cup: other sources, too, of hourly mortification embittered the mind of the unhappy grandee, who wished, with an intensity of jealous affection, to concentrate towards his own person alone all the innumerable tender and affectionate observances which the duteous Estevan invariably bestowed upon his loved mother and her much-venerated parent.

While his nature-bursting heart was enforced to contain its intuitive longings within the cold boundaries of a patron's sphere, the native warmth of Gomez's temper could ill brook the distance to which he had lately subjected himself; and entirely believing the Count's suppression of his real claims to the duty of Estevan arose from his tender and delicate consideration for his daughter and her son's feelings alone, he soon, impelled by gratitude and joy, suffered himself to overstep the barriers of a new and painful restraint; and so far from continuing to preserve his former reverential deportment, he now abandoned himself to the most intimate freedoms with the Count; not unfrequently acknowledging to the proud grandee the delight with which he contemplated, in the bold youth's gallantry, the renewal of his own skill and courage.

This presumption of the simple veteran's (for as such De Ximenes considered it) grew hourly more and more annoying to the haughty lord, whose exasperation had, perhaps, been not wholly unproductive of dangerous effects, but that it was palliated, and in some measure anti-

doted, by the more prudential conduct of the amiable Blanche. The violent shock of surprise and agitation which the late disclosure occasioned to her mind had brought on an accession of disease to her much debilitated system, and an alarming illness of several days succeeded; but, on her partial recovery, she from thenceforward abridged her daily interviews with her son: her epistolary correspondence with him was also in future less frequent and less free; and while this conduct was only enigmatical and painful to him, the object of her tenderest solicitude, it afforded sensible gratification to the self-complaisance of his patron, who received also, with more than common benignity, the added portion of ceremonious diffidence, not unmingled with fear, which in future invariably accompanied her devoirs to himself.

The Count's hauteur insensibly relaxed beneath the mild but omnipotent sway of female propitiation; and the smothered fires of his displeasure against the pious offender faded from his bosom far more swiftly than did the dimpling graces of a countenance on which loveliness

even yet made a last and successful stand against disease and decay. The Count was most earnest in his wish to evince the entire disinterestedness with which he would now have devoted almost his very life to restore peace and health to the lovely mistress of his son; and unable himself to imagine ought of human good, birth excepted, greatly superior to independence, he one day offered to her acceptance the grant of a rich and fertile estate.

A feeble, half-contemptuous smile unclosed the lips of the invalid, as, in respectful but strongly decided terms, she refused the gift; adverting, with more of pride than De Ximenes had believed her capable of entertaining, to her father's present easy independence of circumstances.—"But were I, my lord," she added, "even condemned to wander a long-lived beggar over the earth, I would not, from the parent of my seducer, deign to accept of worldly compensation for eternal loss. My days, Count," she continued, "are numbered: small expenditure, and a *very small spot of land*, is all that is now wanting to make up my present provision and eternal home. The veiled sister of the Chapel

of the Glade has long, by her healing powers, prolonged my vacillating essence to my poor fond father; and sure I am his paternal sorrows would receive little alleviation from weeping for a few short miserable days, after mine have ended, over a heap of shining ingots, the sad commutation of a daughter's shame!"

The Count was irresistibly affected, and quitted Blanche, impressed with a firm belief that, though she was worthy of more than he could offer, it was still a duty he owed to the delicacy of that excellent and remorse-martyred woman to *force* upon her acceptance, at least, in the person of one dearer to her than herself, all he had to bestow, and that in the only unobjectionable form which the melancholy circumstances in which they relatively stood admitted. With, then, as little as possible farther delay he solemnly and publicly adopted Estevan de Aguilar as the future heir of all his alienable property, which was immense; executing, at the same time, a will in his favour to that effect, on the sole condition of his assuming, on his succession, the *name of De Ximenes.*

But the sentiments and conduct of the ill-

fated Blanche seemed destined to operate on all occasions in a manner unaccountably reverse to the wishes and designs of her benefactor. On receiving an intimation of the Count's disposition in her son's favour, she fainted; and almost immediately after her recovery from a long and death-like swoon, exclaimed, "It is accomplished! This fatal adoption severs my last lingering string of life!"

Violent convulsions succeeded, in the grasp of which she struggled for several hours: nature, at length, exhausted in the fearful conflict, sought relief in sleep, or rather a frightful stupor which resembled death itself.

It was on Estevan's eighteenth birthday, that, after several hours of insensibility, Blanche, once more unclosing with difficulty her dimming eyes, fixed them wistfully on the tear-suffused ones of her afflicted son, who had incessantly, since the first announcement of her malady, watched by her pillow; and, pressing his trembling hand to her cold bosom, besought him to immediately require the presence of the Count de Ximenes, for, "Oh!" she cried, rolling in wildness her fast breaking eyes, "I *must not*,

cannot die, *till all is known!* Send, too," she murmured, "for the Superior of the Monastery of St. Benedict and the holy Sister of the Chapel of the Glade: both have ofttimes comforted an hypocrite, a deceiver!—Oh! let, then, the revealment of my guilt, in their pious hearing, form a slight, a trivial, portion of the penance of my deceit!"

Messengers were dispatched in all haste to fulfil the wish of the sufferer, who however soon again relapsed into unconsciousness.

Chap. VII.

Long ere this period had the sweet savour of the piety of the veiled Sister of the Glade (as she was most frequently denominated) extended far and wide beyond the fortunate circle which she inhabited: her religious discourse and holy exhortations had drawn the rankling arrow of remorse from many a despairing heart, and infused into its wounds the healing balm of a hopeful and sincere contrition: the unassuming skill, too, of this saint-like woman in medicine had wrought various surprising cures; and in every instance of bodily affliction for which she prescribed, her simple balsams and cordials, composed chiefly of the distilled juices of salutary herbs and fragrant flowers, had soothed and alleviated those ailments which they could not wholly remove.

Blanche had long been in the habit of praying

at the solitary altar of the Cha
and was sometimes admitted
converse of the holy veiled sis
portion of whose nights and da
ably passed within its sacred wa
gorating preparations had aided p
sustain the waning strength of the
Estevan; but the heart-inspiring devo
veiled sister, her invaluable counsel
example, had proved of still higher
since Blanche had learned from her p
ceptress, to endure life with patience, an
forward to death without fear. Scarc
peasant dweller on the wide-extended don
of the Count de Ximenes but had, on s
occasion, received cause to bless the vei
sister. The feeble steps of the aged she sup
ported, the sick she healed, and at her reproo
the evil-walker turned away from his downward
path. By her the industrious were commended,
the idle reclaimed, the sad comforted, and the bed
of death smoothed, while that of birth was deem-
ed unfortunate which she had not blessed. The
old estimated, the young loved her: even wis-
dom itself revered her modestly-worn honours.

Guilt alone feared, but could not, would not, harm her. All had heard of, all had blessed her, but none had ever beheld that close-veiled sister's face, the mournful secret of whose wondrous identity was to all on that domain (one holy depositary alone excepted) a secret shrouded deeply, imperviously shrouded, within that aching sanctuary in which she proposed it should eternally repose.

The long quiescent Blanche opened, at length, her eyes, for the last, time upon the reverend author of her being, who, struck by deep and inconsolable sorrow, had continued to hang over her dying bed in the cold stupor of hopeless silence. "My father!" she cried, and feebly grasped his trembling hand.

The unhoped, the unexpected sound, the tender pressure he had thought never more to experience, forced from the veteran's writhing heart a flood of nature which streamed in briny torrents upon the pallid face of his darling.

"Oh, my father!" murmured the dying Blanche, "spare me, I beseech you, this more than life-parting torture! Look not upon me with those love, those pity-streaming eyes! I am a wretch,

who, to selfishly deprecate the vengeance of my Eternal Judge, am now preparing to snatch away the last supporting hope of thy declining years, and hurry thy tottering steps fast downward toward my untimely grave!"

Happily the good old man, in assigning to the mere wanderings of delirium these horror-menacing, self-accusations of his expiring daughter, divested them of half their baleful potency but to Estevan's more enlarged and subtle intellects no such comfort was allowed: he connected and compared these expressions of his now death-agonized mother with other half uttered exclamations which he but too well remembered her venting in her past days of comparative health and sanity, and felt that the source of consciousness from which they emanated had long been rooted in her memory and her heart.

"Why, oh! why," exclaimed Blanche, who had remained for a few moments lost in gloomy abstraction, "comes not the Count de Ximenes? Vain subterfuge! Still must the knell of his peace ring in his despairing ears; even from the dead would rise the direful tale."

Strong convulsive agonies again shook her frame, and the last waning fund of vitality seemed nearly exhausted, when the veiled sister arrived, who instantly administered to the sufferer a draught of an aromatic cordial nature, which inspired with a temporary energy her disorganized powers. The announcement of the Count de Ximenes and the Superior of St. Benedict, still more astonishingly than the aid of medicine, resuscitated, though, with a delusive vigour, those dormant spirits which had seemed only to wait the call of great occasion ere they were for ever extinguished.

Blanche required that the Count and the Superior might be conducted to her bed-side, and was instantly obeyed: she then called upon her son. Estevan, who had never for a moment quitted the chamber, was in an instant on his knees, beside his dying mother, whose wasted hand he gently laid upon his throbbing bosom, while the *grief that complains not* sat deeply throned in his darkly lustrous eyes. Never before had the veiled sister beheld so *nearly* that afflicted son; and a sigh, low but deep, which told of feelings, of remembrances long

treasured, long represt, but not th
keen, less potent, rose from her
lifting high her arms to heaven, sh
in his filial act, and resumed her sil
for the departing.

All eyes, all ears, were now directed
the ashy countenance, the tremulous
Blanche, who thus addressed De Ximen

"Count! my awful and immediate
doth truly witness for me, when I aver
that less torturous is the death-pang wh
even now divorcing my soul and body, than
regret, the reluctance, with which I prepa
empoison the minds of those beloved being
whom, at once, by nature and by gratitude,
tenderest and most devoted affections are d
with a knowledge which can never cease
wring with fruitless anguish, till they shall ha
become as I shall shortly be. But I feel that
must not die till others have been enabled t
remember what I shall have forgotten: hear,
then, that *Estevan is not my son*; he has no
natural claims either upon my *father's* affections
or *your's*."

"'Tis false, by heaven!" exclaimed De Xi-

menes: "*your* son he may not be, but the offspring of *mine!* his *features*, his every property of mind and body, proclaim and attest him."

"To that point," replied the dying woman, "I cannot certainly speak: the sources from which he truly does derive his being are to me unknown. He was, when an infant, placed in my hands by a stranger, who suddenly departed, and returned to my sight no more. Blessed be the Almighty for the impulse which, soon after the developement of your extraordinary affection for the youth, led me to commit to writing a circumstantial detail of the facts, feelings, and motives, which have actuated both my past and present conduct, since the angel of release is now imperative in his welcome summons, and forbids farther——"

She gasped convulsively; then, with an almost preternatural effort, raising herself on her bed, drew a roll of paper from beneath her pillow, and held it towards the Count, who, the petrified statue of amazed despair, seemed utterly unconscious of her action, and the Superior of the Monastery of St. Benedict received it for

him. It was a thin manuscrip
a black ligament.

Blanche, whose eyes had follo
of her document, now with di
"Within those papers is folded a
of the Virgin: it was originally sew
of rich brocade, and lay on that yo
when I received him. I soon afterwa
away its envelope, in order to ascer
ther——"

Here her voice became utterly inart
and was for some moments lost in the r
agony of death; but suddenly she exclai
"Father! O my dear, dear Father! c
hither; kiss me, and forgive, forgive and bl
your poor guilty Blanche!"

The old man circled with his trembling arms
his expiring daughter; then, clasping his wither-
ed hands, lifted them and his streaming eyes
towards heaven, as he solemnly uttered, "Bless
thee, my child! even so bless, even so forgive
me, Heaven, at my last sad solitary parting, as
I do *thee!* We soon, I trust, shall meet again,
my darling!" he added, as he pressed his qui-

vering lips to the pale ones of his Blanche, whose now placid smile expressed, that sense remained to feel the joy she could not tell.

Silently she outstretched either hand toward the veiled sister and the weeping Estevan, who each tenderly lifted the last pledge of gratitude and affection to their lips. The Superior of St. Benedict, standing at the bed's foot, reared high the holy crucifix, upon which the eyes of the parting penitent fastened with rapturous entrancement of convictive hope: an inward ejaculation trembled in expressive silence on her graceful lips; then gently shutting her eyes, she softly dropped her head into her father's bosom. Her cares were fled for ever!

The veiled sister of the Glade sank on her knees by the bed, on which reclining her face, she continued to pray in solemn silence. Estevan joined in the devotions of the Superior, and the old man hung over the departed darling of his days, whose cold face his almost equally cold tears still bedewed; while the Count, suddenly recovering from his trance of horror, snatched up the manuscript of Blanche from a table on which the Superior had placed it, and

bestowed by himself up
fortunate Estella, and
fearful recognition; whi
in surprise, for strong
agonies of De Ximen
but too-well-remembere
around and around, wi
while he exclaimed,

"Here is a strang
since, in my doating phr
treasure in a serpent's k

"It is the seal of ou
Superior.

"This image," added
certain recollection, ho
light: 'tis now (balanci
ceptibly weightier."

A lamp was burning b
near the bed, to the flam

heat; and the extremity of the figure was no sooner molten, than the slips of parchment placed within it's enclosure by Father Cherubino fell from their depositary, and were unfolded by the Count. The certificate of the marriage of Carlos de Medina and Estella de Ximenes, as performed by Father Vincentio, an Italian monk (whom the business of his convent had then lately brought to Spain, and who was utterly ignorant of the rank and family concerns of those he had united), was first perused; the testimony of the departed Father Cherubino as to the birth and baptism of Carlos de Medina, the only fruit of that marriage, next met his eye; and, lastly, the brooch, the gift of paternal tenderness to the ill-fated Estella, was discovered, examined, and identified.

While this extraordinary process proceeded, the unhappy Gomez, the Superior of St. Benedict, and the amazed, shuddering Carlos (as we must now designate him), formed a circle of speechless and scarcely breathing interest around the passion-paralyzed Count, whose distorted features and writhing limbs but faintly

pressed the contending passions which tore his soul. At length a frightful death-like calmness stole over his visage, and a smile, more hideous than the fellest frown, sundered his quivering lips, as he extended his hand towards the shrinking youth.

"Come hither, Don Carlos de Medina," he hoarsely said: "you are *yet* my grandson, and *now* my legitimate heir: come, then, to thy grandsire's arms, O thou hopeful bud of the brightest, fellest flower that ever adorned the dominions of the dead. One embrace for my past dotage sake, and one blow sacred to the memory of my murdered Alphonso, discharges all my remaining duties. Child of rebellious and fratricidal love, farewell for ever!"

He grasped the hair of his unresisting victim; his glittering poignard sought the ivory neck of the youth, when his murder-armed hand was arrested by a voice,—it was that of Estella,—which cried, in piercing accents, "Oh, father! relentless father! spare my innocent child!"

The Count started as though the secrets of eternity had been revealed to his corporeal ear:

again the same sounds struck horrors more than human to his phrenzied soul; the poignard fell from his unnerved grasp, and he sank down in insensibility.

"Fly!" cried the veiled sister (as with superhuman strength she caught the arm of the bewildered youth, and forcibly thrust him from the apartment; "fly to the sanctuary of the Chapel of the Glade, nor dare to release thy hold of its altar till thou beholdest my form again."

While thus conjuring, she had hurried him with breathless speed from that dismal chamber of death so near becoming the scene of his own, and from the once happy cottage, the peaceful asylum of his former unconscious security; but the youth would hang at her knees till she had granted to him her benediction.

"Oh! Carlos," cried she, "if the peace of the exalted dead, if the salvation of your guilty grandsire, be not valueless in your esteem, make now the wind thy courser."

"No!" exclaimed the youth; "thy wishes, thy behests, shall be my speed:" and snatching her white hands to his lips, he bounded forward

a mother's piety!

Chap. VIII.

MEANWHILE Estella had returned to the side of her still fainting parent, whom she directed the rustic servants of the afflicted Gomez to raise and convey to another apartment, and distend upon a couch. By the aid of powerful stimulants and restoratives which she applied, the recovery of De Ximenes was soon effected, who, waking as from the dominion of a terrible dream, beheld only the closely veiled sister watching by his side. The late forceful and gloomy temper of his soul speedily succeeded the placidity of unconsciousness; he sat up on the couch, and scanned with furiously enquiring glances the apartment for the vanished object of his reawakened vengeance.

"Man of sinful purpose," said Estella, resuming the feigned voice and accent in which, since her concealment, she usually dis-

coursed, "is the baleful madness of thy unnatural malice yet unabated? and dost thou, indeed, revive to restored existence only to again (even in more attempered blood) design the death of the innocent, helpless, orphaned memorial of a pure, a heaven and earthly-sanctioned flame, whose venial trespass was but the forestalment of your own decree? And what the fearful penalty? Your daughter *died* for that disobedience, the victim of a stifled, maternal sorrow; and her noble husband fell a sacrifice to the faithful love which led him back to her arms! Are not these expiations sufficient to thy insatiate revenge? but must the blood of that most estimable pledge of so hapless a passion be also poured out a libation to the memory of a betrayer of innocence? All the sacred names of heaven's blest denizens were called to witness the purity of your idolized Alphonso's intents towards thelovely, injured Blanche; and outraged heaven permitted the sword of his foe to pierce the heart of its recreant contemner! Say; shall it be bruited in the halls of Medina, that therefore the gallant, the generous, the gray-haired De Ximenes, the *last* of his great name, murdered his

young grandson, derived from the fairest, the noblest, the most loyal of their line, who lived, who died, for his daughter? Count De Ximenes, I am a woman whom sorrow has long since chased from the bowers of joy to the cells of penitence and mortification, and whom all the returning bribes of happiness and fortune may never more divorce from that blessed reverse which true devotion has decked with the treasures of eternal hope. My only earthly bliss is centred in the good of others; and the heirdom of all that measureless wealth which report doth boast has lately reverted from thy dead daughter's rights to thine, could not win from me one vigil on that cold marble, in the Chapel of the Glade, which marks the spot where virtue's martyrs passed from earth to heaven. Thy human weal, thy eternal acceptation, are the sole inducements of my speech. The voice of thy daughter (I knew it well) has called to thee, even as from her grave, to hold thy impious hand! Hold, then, that impious hand!—stay, then, thy direful course!—commit not, oh, commit not *new* crimes, but strive to cancel those which are already recorded against thee,

by receiving the innocent Carlos to thy paternal bosom; which, mark me well, will never again know peace till he *is* folded there!"

The Count regarded the veiled sister with an air in which awakened remorse was combated by pride, resentment, and disappointment.

"Scant your exhortations, prating woman!" said he: "I have a right holy and distinguished spiritual director, and can well spare the admonitions of veil and forehead cloth. Yet (for I do suspect thee, notwithstanding thy pretended holy disinterestedness, for a favourer, if not an emissary, of the accursed Medina) I will thus far possess thee with my fixed resolve. An outlawed outcast, loathed not less by my vengeance than by my love, shall the ill-omened pledge of disobedience, whom thou hast pleaded for, remain for ever! And, farther, many years since a whining page, whose accents, because they were womanish and shrill, I deem reminded me of a dead alien, had almost won from me, for her memory, a pardon for a sin of which I knew not then the full magnitude; and, by to-morrow's dawn, had not this wondrous act of destiny been e'en now disclosed, I did intend to have

sought her turf-bound stranger grave, and to have breathed upon it that paternal remission which durative marble should afterwards have memorialized. To that grave I will still repair; but it shall *now* be to *ban*, not *bless*, the mortal relics, the *eternal spirit*, of that impious mould, in which was cast the seal of her own crime and that of her father's unremediable despair!"

The veiled sister shrank to the feet of De Ximenes, which she kissed, and wept aloud.

"Oh! my lord! my lord!" she cried, "can no pleadings, no prayers, prevent your fatal purpose?"

"None!" coolly replied the Count, as, bursting from the grasp of the supplicant, he summoned his attending train; and, vaulting upon his prepared courser, rode swiftly from the dwelling of the sorrowful Gomez.

The first beams of a tardy sun had scarcely, as if unwilling to enlighten an act so unblessed, shot their upward gleams through a lowering sky, when the inflexible De Ximenes, sullenly, silently, and alone, paced the drear cemetery of the convent of St. Anastasia, and sought the lowly uninscribed grave of Estella, which a

previously obtained special direction soon enabled him to discover. Upon it lay prostrate, in prayer, the veiled sister, who, starting at his approach, once more sought to win him from the unnatural purpose of his fearful visit.

"Woman!" replied the Count, in a taunting tone, while scorn curved his lip, and rageful impatience, ill subdued, scintillated from his dark piercing eye, "thy earnestness of deprecation at length shall speed to somewhat sway me from my purposed bias: besides, I have e'en now bethought me, that, spite of my lately expressed suspicions, thy *meaning* may yet intend pure holiness a service, however thy judgment errs in its performance. Parental malediction is, in sooth, a fearful ban, more especially when the *dead* are cursed, who may never hear that curse repealed; and added still is the horror, when the curser feels the warm blood prepare to stagnate at the poisoned heart, which hope, man's latest friend, has deserted, and knows that life's taper can never last to light the hour in which remorse might rescind the anathema which revenge had launched. Besides, thou art a vestal, unrelationed, and passion-unassailed being, whose

eyes have never worshipped, whose heart has never doted upon a lovely creature parted forth from its own vital store; whose arms of parricidal cruelty could unfold to embrace the relative of a dear, an only brother's murderer, and receive in his affections the brand of mastery of her own race's glory, the extinction of their name, and the exaltation of his whose very deed had made it void. Yet, holy pleader, will I grant to thy supplication this *concession:* if from that cold cell of obstructive decomposition thy prayers can invoke the material form of *her* whom, so many years since, its earthly jaws received; if thou, of the saving efficacy of whose petitions the world prates so loudly, canst perform that present miracle, and render up to my unshrinking vision the bright ringleted wife of De Medina, I swear by my injuries, by my woes, by my honour, nay, by my *soul itself,* I will pronounce 'Estella is forgiven!'"

"Rejoicing angels!" cried the veiled sister, "attune your golden lyres to those sacred sounds!"

Swift as light she sprang upwards; the enveloping robe of gray fell from her finely proportioned form, arrayed in a cymar of purest

white: the long concealing veil receded from her face of loveliness, her ringlets of golden gleam; and *Estella sought the bosom of her father!*

At that wild, that wondrous contact, in which the precious, long-bereaved treasure seemed newly born to the despair-desolated parent, hope and nature revived together; while the frantic, the fearful past, receding into oblivion, he forcibly grasped her to his quick throbbing heart, and "Estella is forgiven" rang in her raptured ears like seraph requiems to a guilt-enfranchised soul! She fainted beneath the strong, the stranger pressure of felicity, but was soon restored by the warm life-bestowing tears of a father's pity, a father's love!

The excellent Superior of St. Benedict, returning from his matin orisons over the grave of a lately departed sister of the convent of St. Anastasia, broke upon the blest converse of the Count de Ximenes, who, seated on that dank sod which had so long enroofed her supposed last sad dwelling, held his Estella, yet warm in life and loveliness, in his paternal embrace. Vivid and strong was the joyful surprise of the

holy man at this blessed view, and fervent and sincere his prompt adoration of the ever-waking guidance and dispensations of Omnipotence; while the blest, re-united objects of its saving mercy, roused from their trance of happiness by the devotions of the reverend Father to a more quick remembrance of their own vast dues of gratitude, joined in the votive thanksgiving to their Divine Benefactor; and then accepted the good Superior's invitations to refresh and repose themselves in the parlour of the convent.

When her father cast her from him on the preceding evening, Estella had been relieved by a temporary deprivation of sensation, but, soon recovering, hastened to the hermitage, which was situate within but a few furlongs of the abode of Gomez: from thence she had provided herself with some of the simple aliments upon which she entirely subsisted, laden with which she instantly proceeded to the Chapel of the Glade.

Eloquent indeed would be the language which should successfully describe her feelings, as, for the first time since she had given him being, she called upon the name of her son, who, rushing

forward, was received into the arms of his mother, who now first revealed that sacred secret of nature and calamity upon the very spot where his brave father had fallen in her defence. Love is never so exquisite as when it is blended with admiration. Young Carlos gazed upon the still nymph-like beauty of his mother with a sense of admiration, which blended with his pity, his gratitude, and his reverence, that devoted gallantry which grace and loveliness ever so irresistibly elicit from the generous and manly heart. He was not only the dutiful son, but the enthusiastic champion of the same time-undimmed star which had arbitrated the destiny of his accomplished father.

Estella had resolved, if possible, to deprecate the fearful denunciation of her yet loved parent; and the way to the convent of St. Anastasia was, as mournful and too faithful memory well reminded her, long, lone, and wearisome; yet, with a bursting heart, she at the midnight hour tore herself from the arms of her son, to commence alone her fateful journey, entreating him to remain concealed in the sanctuary of the Glade till her return; but should she, as her

trembling heart fearfully augured, never return, what then would be the destiny of her son? His very life itself menaced by an unnatural and predominating vengeance.

Carlos, whose fondest interests had, in one brief interview, taken root in the fate of his charming mother, read in her oft dewed eyes, her varying cheeks, and ill-repressed sighs, the disturbance of her soul, and, dreading naught so fearful as a separation from her, clasped her in his nervous arms, declaring that death alone should again divide them. At this moment, Heaven directed that the faithful Leon de Silva, who twice in each year visited his saint-like lady, should arrive at the Chapel of the Glade: he had first entered the hermitage, and finding that its solitary inhabitant was absent, had waited there some time, hoping her return, which not occurring, he proceeded to seek her at her dearest, most certain asylum, the Chapel of the Glade, where an introduction of wonder and of joy awaited and rewarded his undiminished zeal, his unswerving fidelity. By his representations Carlos was, at length, convinced that his affection and duty would best be proved by an

implicit submission to the first command of his anxious mother; but, had he truly known that devoted mother's intended errand, it is certain her pious purpose had been defeated by the just vehemence of his filial fears for her safety, in an encounter from which she so sedulously guarded himself. Her intents, her hopes, and her dreads, were alike locked in her own labouring bosom; and Carlos, when assured by Leon that he would himself protect the midnight journey of his mother to the convent of St. Anastasia, where she represented concerns of the most urgent import demanded her attendance, yielded, at length, a reluctant consent to their temporary disseverment.

Once departed from the Chapel of the Glade, Estella would willingly have dissuaded her friendly but already travel-worn companion from attending farther on her solitary path: she was earnest in her entreaty that he would bend his steps back to the hermitage, and, availing himself of needful rest and refreshment, there await her return: but Leon de Silva resisted not only representations and entreaties, but even commands; nor could his heart de-

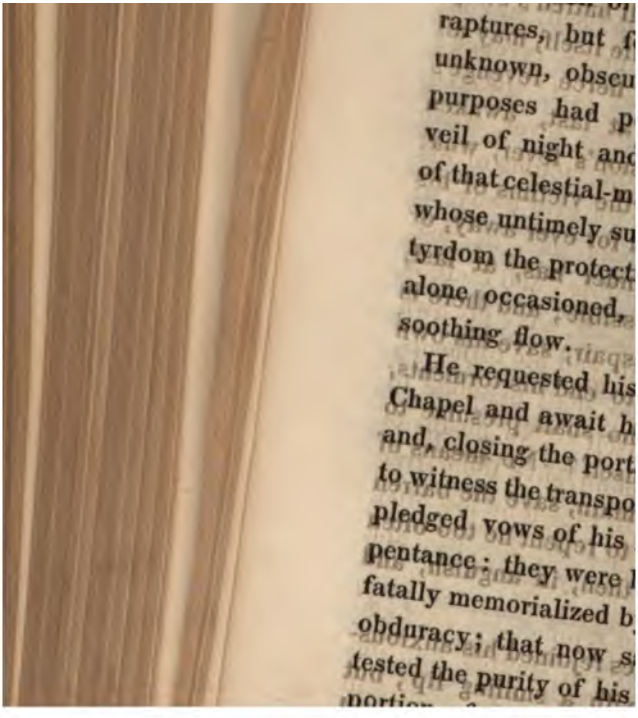
voted fealty prevent his resenting, with all the warmth of suspected attachment, propositions which implied him capable of leaving any female, much less the worshipped widow of his noble master, to tread alone, and at midnight, a path so dreary, marked too, on memory's tablet, by ills so dark, so irremediable.

Arrived near the gates of the cemetery of the convent, Estella first imparted to Leon the purpose of her journey, commanding him, should aught ill befal her in its execution, to protect the departure of her son from the Chapel of the Glade to Madrid, and, when there, to straightway present him to the father of her husband, the ancient Duke de Medina, who had survived also his eldest son, the fatally successful antagonist of her brother. On his knees did Leon strive to deter her rash and dangerous intent; but that mysterious power which had inspired it, gave not only the fortitude, the nerve of soul, needful to complete it, but also an all-convincing, all-subduing eloquence, which left the perfectibility, as well as the propriety of her purpose, indisputable. With much difficulty Leon succeeded in obtaining permission to await the result with-

out the walls of the cemetery, and it was anxiously and grievously pacing their awful confines that the good Superior found him, when, at Estella's most earnest request, that holy man became the messenger to her generous adherent of the auspicious termination of her eventful errand and his justly excited fears. With a joy-bounding heart he followed his venerable guide to the presence of his loved lady, and, ere the sun had reached his meridian throne, swift coursers stopped, panting at the thicket's awful pass; and Estella, the blest Estella, beheld her son clasped to the heart of her father!

Chap. IX.

THE mournful history of her infant's mysterious birth in her prison of the Casa Niegra, his wondrous and fearful disappearance from thence, and all the train of woes which had succeeded her supposed death, had already, on the untenanted grave of the cemetery of St. Anastasia, been succinctly related by Estella to her admiring father, who needed not now to be informed that she was the page whose heart-awakening accents had faintly fanned the dormant spark of parental regret, parental pity. De Ximenes wept; but he had tears to offer to other remembrances beside his daughter's wrongs and sufferings. The gallant youth, who had once been even *son*-dear to him long ere he became so, whose glorious life, even in its blossom-tide, had been sacrificed to the preservation of his daughter's honour, yet, still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pause, fearfully pause, ere he once yields up the dominion of his heart to fell hatred's sway. Desert, health, peace, fame, life itself, may all become the offerings of his fierce revenge's hecatomb; and should he, at last, awaken from the delirium of his passion's fever, what atonement remains? Alas! the victims of his wrath have all either passed for ever away, or the reparation he would render has, at last, become undesirable or impossible; and there is naught left to offer to his despair, save his own *salvation*. But to suicide, to end his torments, he dares not rush; for who shall presume to condemn, to sentence himself? No means of expiation for his crimes remain, save the barren wailings of remorse, for to repent he too often dares not: he lives on, then, in anguish, and dies in terror!

The Count De Ximenes rejoined his anxiously expecting children with a smiling lip; but the indentings of sorrow and care were still visible on his ruffled brow; for, though much still remained to him, he had, in the madness of his wrath, lost years of bliss, which, freighted on the tide of all-devouring time, might never

more return! He found the good Superior of St. Benedict at the hermitage, whither he had brought the document of the departed Blanche: this writing was judged to contain the long-unravelled mystery of the manner of the idiot's flight with and disposal of the young Carlos; the Count, therefore, requested the Superior to read it aloud, while a fixed attention rested on every sense of the deeply-interested hearers.

THE DOCUMENT OF BLANCHE GOMEZ.

Addressed to the Count de Ximenes.

COUNT DE XIMENES!—To you I dedicate those heart-wrung ownings, for to you the explanation they contain is most important. Pardon my memory, when aught like egotism in them shall meet your eye. I merely mean to express my own feelings and motives as far as your interests and your views are implicated in them; and shall with an almost inkless pen pass over all circumstances and incidents unconnected with those primary objects. From the many corroborative proofs which yourself and your present servant Manuel have adduced, I feel deeply convinced, that to your son, Don Alphonso de

Ximenes, I owed my fatal temptation from the peaceful path of innocence; but he has passed away as a summer cloud, and there remains naught, save the record of heaven, on which his false vows were doubtless inscribed, and the testimony of my own conscience, to witness that I yielded not up my honour to his wishes till he had, with the most holy oaths, promised to become, at a future but early period, my husband. Alas! a few weeks after he had degraded and deceived, he also abandoned me, without even a parting word: it was from strangers I learned that he had suddenly quitted Paris, France itself; and from thenceforward I saw or heard of him no more.

I concealed my condition (of which I became sensible almost immediately after his departure) for several months, most part of which period I passed in my bed, on pretence of a violent rheumatic affection in my limbs: the fallacy of this complaint it was difficult for the medical attendants my good lady allowed me to detect; but, as the proper season advanced, they prescribed a journey to some warm springs of great celebrity in the cure of my pretended ailment;

and the discovery of my deceit and shame ensued together.

My injured patroness left my apartment overwhelmed with confusion, grief, anger, and contempt; nor was I ever permitted to behold her face again, though her tender bounties never failed to follow and support me in my deserved exile from her presence. By her directions I was visited by the priest who had the guardianship of her own conscience: he questioned me as to the name and profession of the father of my expected child, and to him I fully entrusted the little all which I knew of my seducer's family and connexions. That priest was called Father Louis: he was a man in the prime of life, of great sanctity of manners, and was very lately still living in my lady's family. That excellent lady soon after caused me to be sent to the abode of a devoted tenant of the Count de Luneville's, who rented a small estate of that nobleman, situated in a solitary hamlet many leagues away from the metropolis: the utter retirement which the place promised, and the tried fidelity of their retainers, being my lady's charitable motives for directing my removal

thither, as the most probable means of concealing a dereliction, with the intelligence of which she declared she could not immediately summon sufficient courage to wound my poor old father's heart.

In less than three weeks after my arrival at the farm of Claude Giraud (for so was my lord's tenant named) I became the mother of a male infant, whom my kind hosts, at my earnest entreaty, caused to be baptized Estevan de Aguilar, after his false father. The heavy upbraidings of my own heart, and the incurable anguish which I was but too conscious the knowledge of my fault would occasion to that of my dear father, caused me to endure, and regard with almost utter indifference, the severe sufferings which that fault had occasioned me. For several hours after the birth of my child my life was despaired of; and I continued in a very low state of health long after every trace of immediate danger had retired. But the christian admonitions of my worthy hosts, who were fully possessed with all the circumstances of my sad story, antidoted, at length, that heart-seated cancer which my unavailing remorse had hi-

therto nourished, and called my mind to the performance of those indispensable duties which my new character demanded.

My boy was extremely delicate, and the wife of my host, the excellent Maria, who had acted both as my nurse and monitor, assured me he would die, if my milk was either checked or vitiated by the longer indulgence of my grief and despair. My child was inexpressibly dear to me, though I often bitterly regretted that his features and complexion only reflected back my own; and I would have given the whole universe, had it been mine to give, that he had resembled his cruel but still loved father!

Air, exercise, and the wholesome and nourishing food which, for my child's preservation, I compelled myself to receive, insensibly restored my health; and but for my anxious fears respecting my dear father, to whom I had never yet dared to acknowledge my transgression, much less its dreadful consequences, I again began to feel more tranquil than I deserved, or indeed could ever have hoped to become again.

It would have given me much added comfort to have been permitted to pour out my heart of

gratitude and contrition to my ever-revered lady, and to assure her that I now hoped to be soon enabled to work for my own support and that of my dear infant; but that justly outraged benefactress had equally forbid my pen as my lips to ever again address her.

All my working implements, and a rich stock of silks, had been forwarded to Giraud's with my clothes; and, at every interval which my attendance on my child allowed, I sedulously applied to my embroidery, at which I was accounted no mean proficient. It was by the sale of works of this kind that I hoped, at some no very distant period, to render myself independent of, or at least somewhat less burthensome to, her compassion and generosity: a large portion of my days and nights were thus devoted and employed when my poor little darling, who was now nearly ten months old, grew suddenly alarmingly ill. There was no regular medical practitioner settled in that lonely place; but both the priest who had baptized him, and my kind Maria, had, by long experience, acquired no inconsiderable skill in infantile disorders, and they ministered to my poor, obscure,

birth-degraded baby with the same care and anxiety they would have exerted had it been the expectant heir of a crown, which they were sedulous to preserve: but, alas! no human aid, not even a despairing mother's prayers, might save him. On the fourth day from that on which he sickened, he was seized with convulsions, and expired in my arms!

None but young mothers, who have lost in the innocent bud of infancy the dear-earned first-born of their bloom, and kissed off from its pale pouting lips the last, last drop of their bosom's fountain which it shall ever drain, can judge of what my sorrows were; their intensity blunted, at length, their force. Awaking as from a long and uneasy dream, I looked around me for my dead infant; but the charitable Maria told me I had been for three weeks a *maniac;* and the young violets, which her kind hand had planted on his little grave, had already bloomed and withered as he had done. Good and feeling woman! she was indefatigable in her conservation of my worthless being; but I saw with pain that the incessant fatigue my illness had occasioned her had impaired her own strength,

and depressed the customed hilarity of her mind: a larger part, too, of the charge and cares of the farm had devolved upon her management; for her husband had been called away to attend the death-bed of his father, in a distant province, two days before my child sickened. Once more a fresh motive was presented to me for resignation and activity, by the sacred claims of friendship and gratitude; and while I strove to lighten the cares of my benevolent hostess, heaven, as recompensing the effort, mercifully suspended the pressure of my own.

I failed not to enquire of Maria whether she had, during my disorder, communicated the intelligence of my child's death to my lady: she told me that she had not done so, in consequence of Claude's absence; for as she herself could not write, she had avoided trusting even the *priest* with the management of a correspondence which might probably unveil to his knowledge my disgrace, and had rather preferred to await the crisis of my returning reason, an event of which she had never despaired. Thus circumstanced, I resolved to venture to break through my lady's prohibition, by addressing to her a few

lines on the subject of my late deprivation, and explanatory, also, of that circumstance which had compelled me to infringe her positive commands.

It was the closing in of a stormy autumnal evening, when, fastening the cottage door, I lighted a lamp, and, collecting my writing implements, commenced my doubly painful task. My eyes streamed, my brain wandered, my heart beat heavily, and my hand trembled so much that I could scarcely command my pen; I had already blotted and cast away two uncompleted epistles, and was commencing a third, when Maria, who sat twirling her distaff beside me, interposed, and, adverting to the lateness of the hour, advised that I should defer writing till the morning. I instantly complied with what I believed the wish of my kind friend, who had been laboriously employed during the whole of the day, and now evidently needed refreshment and rest; and, putting aside my employment, spread our homely evening's meal, to which we were just about to set down, when a gentle rap at the door excited our attention.

Habituated in that lone spot to the practice of cautious enquiry, I demanded who was there?—"A weary wanderer (returned a low but deep-toned voice), who longs for *rest* in *vain*." Such a voice *never* had I heard before; such an one never have I since heard: its cold, heavy, solemn tones seemed to sink into and chill my heart; and that short but pathetic complaint operated on it with the force of an authoritative command. Maria, indeed, desired me to unclose the door; but I had opened it ere the words passed her lips. An almost gigantic figure stood at the threshold, enveloped entirely in a large and flowing dark red mantle. I started back with surprise, mingled with fear, for the stature, the habiliments, of the supplicant for admission were alike extraordinary; but the wail of a child, which the figure seemed to hide beneath its ample drapery, re-assured me. Still the stranger remained immovable in the doorway, and Maria, in a somewhat faint voice, said, "Why do you not enter?"—"Because I have not been bidden in the way in which wanderers, in the good old times, were!" was the reply.

Maria was a woman of a remarkably firm spirit; yet the attitude, strange attire, and peculiar voice of the stranger, had, at first, as she has since owned to me, greatly awed her; but the hesitation at entering leading her to believe that no violence was intended, and that the stranger was probably a pilgrim suffering under the performance of some rigid penance, and, unwilling to deny the rights of hospitality to one, who, so circumstanced, doubly needed them, she said, somewhat impatiently, "Enter, in the *name of God*, if ye will, or I shall shut my door for the night."

The figure, lowering its lofty head, instantly obeyed her requisition, and with a shuddering hand I reclosed the door, and presented the stranger with a seat near the hearth, stirring into a more cheerful blaze its flagging flame. The stranger now divested her head of the shade of the large mantle, which dropped in heavy folds over her expanded shoulders, disclosing such a countenance as I had never supposed could be associated with mortality. A wild species of unearthly beauty and dignity was diffused over each marking feature, and yet the

visage was such an one as might not be gazed upon without trembling. Long streaming hair, blacker and brighter than jet itself, wandered over her finely sculptured bust, and descended nearly to the ground. The expression of her beautiful but glazed eye seemed to hint at themes unknown to mundane contemplation; and on her left cheek appeared deeply impressed a large transverse scar.

Maria set before our strange visitant an ample meal, and a horn of her best wine; but she declined both meat and drink. "I want nought but *rest*," she murmured. Maria rose, and offered to conduct her to a bed-chamber. "Not yet," said she, "for I have not yet fully performed my duty. Here is one who can receive the benefit of your hospitality."

She drew from beneath her mantle a lovely blooming infant boy, seemingly about the same age as my lately lost Estevan. I screamed aloud as I gazed on the child, for his young but strongly moulded features even *then* presented the perfect miniature of those of my still adored seducer; and, snatching him from the lap of the stranger, I imprinted a thousand kisses on his

velvet cheeks. Maria joined in my admiration of the child's beauty, while our guest looked on with a peculiar expression of mournful pleasure.

"It is indeed a *strong* resemblance," she at length said. I started: "Of *whom* mean you?" cried I.—"Of *him you mean*," was her laconic answer.

My visage seemed to flame; our eyes involuntarily met; but mine instantly again sank beneath the descriptionless scrutiny of her's, and, vainly striving to disguise my confusion, I busied myself in attending on the infant, who fed heartily, smiled, and crowed in my face; twined his little fat arms round my neck, and nestling his beautiful head in my bosom soon sank into a calm sleep. My heart's impulse burst from my lips, as, gazing upon the lovely rest of innocence, I exclaimed, "Would to Heaven he were mine!"

"Heaven *lends* him to you," instantly said the stranger; "and, if you wish well to your own soul, you *will accept* the loan even readily as 'tis offered. There was (she added) a stately tree, which the great cleaver had deprived of

all its numerous branches, save only two, but they were fair ones, and each branch produced a bud: but, lo! those last branches were also severed from their parent trunk, and their buds from them; and blessed *(mark well what I reed)*, blessed, I say, shall she be who saves *one of those buds*, even though the *tree itself perish*. Wish she for wealth, health, length of days, or aught else here below, her wish is given her."

"I have," said I, "a *dearer* wish than all the tripled blessings thou hast named."

"I know thou hast," answered the stranger, "and 'tis thine own act which will possess or deprive thee of its fulfilment. If thou *grantest my* wish, *thou* shalt have *thine*: again shalt thou eat of thy father's bread in thine own land, and drink of the cup which he shall bless to thee; and, finally, thou shalt go to sleep in his bosom."

Awful amazement rose high in my soul at these wondrous words, for the mystic being before me had, indeed, read the secret wish which casketed in my heart of hearts, nor lips had ever sounded or signs revealed.

I have faithfully related the *words* of that wondrous diviner; but to describe her *tones*, her *looks*, her *action*, were impossible. Maria roused me, at length, from a trance of silent amazement, by intimating that the stranger awaited my reply. Doubt, fear, and confusion, were mingled with my hopes; and in a faltering tone I replied, "I will *think* on what you have said."

"It is enough," replied the stranger; "thy *thoughts* shall answer me."

She then turned towards Maria: "Your orchard," said she, "is well loaden, and the fruit fully ripe; your vintage, indeed, is tardy, because many of your vines, ill planted, woo the noonday sunbeams in vain: yet are they nearly enough. Arise, then, by the morrow's dawn; awaken your labourer, and bid him hire to you helpers sufficient; pluck your apples and your grapes; hasten to house your corn, shed your cattle, and shelter your poultry, and your hives: see well that nought of your substance be left ungathered up or abroad; for, ere this wasting moon be entirely waned, all who, having received, neglect this caution, shall have

heavy cause to rue their incredulity, as certainly as *that here are eight fingers.*"

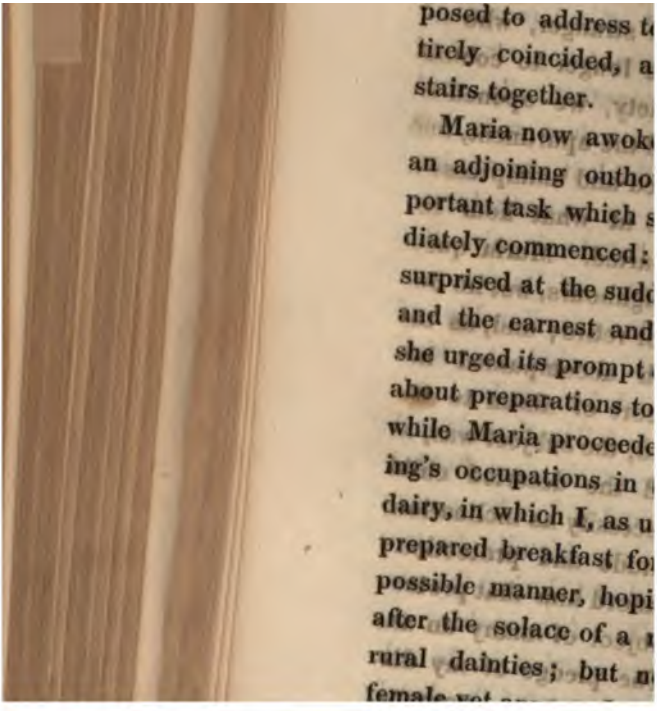
As she spoke, she expanded before the lamp's blaze her long and white hands; and we gazed with surprise upon them, for *both her thumbs were wanting!*—Then, motioning a silent benediction on the babe, who still slept in my arms, she withdrew (preceded by Maria, who carried a lamp) to her allotted chamber.

Chap. X.

MARIA quickly returned, her face, bold as she was, blanched by fear, and contemplated mine, in which she beheld the reflection of her own emotions in silence; for a sentiment of inexpressible awe chained our tongues from recurring to the subject of our thoughts, and shudderingly we sought our beds. The lovely little boy shared mine, but sleep was a stranger to my pillow. I had promised our mysterious inmate to think on what she had proposed, but should, indeed, have found it impossible to think on aught else. Her surprising speech had filled my mind with sensations till then unknown. I certainly did greatly fear her; I also (strange as it may appear) could not, in some measure, avoid believing her promise: yet dear, most dear, as was the wish of its performance to my heart, it was not entirely either

my dread reliance or desires which bribed my already mentally-breathed acceptance of the precious trust which she had offered to me: it was *its own dear face, the animated portrait of my heart's only love,* that sympathetically, as it were, drew my resolves into unison with her strange proposal. But I still felt it was my imperious duty not to render up an entirely unconditional acquiescence, but to inquire the babe's parentage, the cause of its so extraordinary exposure to the guardianship of strangers, and the probable period at which that guardianship was intended to expire.

Maria rose ere sun-rise to follow the counsel of her singular visitant: our beds were divided by a very slight partition, and it had been easy for me to ascertain that my friendly hostess had been scarcely less wakeful during the preceding night than myself. Approaching my bedside, she whispered her opinion on the subject of my accepting the charge of the lovely boy, who still slumbered sweetly beside me: her sentiments were the same as my own; she, too, had become most unaccountably interested in the child, but she acknowledged that dread of



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tually alarmed and surprised, we then proceeded to her chamber door, at which we loudly rapped, calling repeatedly upon the stranger, who replied not: at length, unable longer to contain our consternation and anxiety, we opened it; but the stranger had quitted the apartment, and the bed remained undisturbed and unimpressed.

It was in vain to guess at what hour the mysterious woman had departed. Maria questioned her labourer and neighbours, but no one had seen her either arrive or retire; and, as the strange description which accompanied her inquiries added a vague sort of alarm to the surprise which they excited, the subject was, at length, relinquished, and the deserted child became, as much from necessity as inclination, the object of my solicitude and protection; but how to continue to afford him that protection, soon became the subject of many an anguished rumination. The pledge of my disobedience and my shame had been, perhaps, mercifully recalled from me; why, then, dare to obtrude upon the bounty of my benefactors, or the perhaps returning tenderness of my father, a stranger's offspring? Yet now to desert him,

or even to delegate my trust to another, I felt to be impossible.

While these reflections disturbed and almost distracted my mind, a letter from my dear father (whom I had never, since my unhappy fall, dared to address) arrived: I found he had been severely wounded in body as well as mind, but was now fast recovering from the effects of one infliction, and mercifully inclined to forgive the guilty wretch whose dereliction had occasioned his other and most painful suffering. He had long since been, by the Count de Luneville, apprised of my crime; he now at length absolved it, and tenderly invited me and my hapless babe to Spain and his paternal arms together. This thrice blessed letter I could not avoid believing an earnest of the fulfilment of the mystic woman's promise, and rejoiced that the circumstance of my child's decease had remained a secret from my noble benefactors, who would, doubtless, have forwarded the not improbably welcome intelligence to my parent.

The next day brought another packet: it was from Claude Giraud, who advised his wife that a lawsuit, which, as his father's heir, his uncle

had just commenced against him respecting the possession of certain old disputed points of family property, would most probably detain him from her some weeks longer. In the reply to that letter, which I wrote for Maria, I was cautious to avoid hinting at my child's death; and as Maria, at my most earnest entreaty, had solemnly promised on her part to keep her husband in ignorance of it, at least during the period of his absence from home, I had hopes that I might be enabled, ere his return, to rejoin my father, or, at all events, reach some new and secret asylum, where my want of affinity to my beloved charge might remain unquestioned and unknown.

In re-dressing the infant on the first day he was cast on my care, I had discovered the small leaden image of the Holy Virgin, which accompanies this document, folded within his swaddling-bands; and, by Maria's advice, I immediately unripped the shred of brocade in which it was enclosed, but found nothing to satisfy farther curiosity.

Three days after the disappearance of the warning stranger there occurred the most violent

subject of my own fate; when suddenly another letter from my dear father, in answer to my reply to his blessed invitation, in which I had intimated, that, dissolved in grateful shame, I wished but still dreaded to behold his injured face, reached me: it was dated only from the next post town. He had voyaged to France to spare my guilty blushes, receive my penitence, adopt my child, and in person conduct me and him to Spain, to my paternal home! But fatigue, joined to excess of emotion, had arrested his hitherto rapid progress; some symptoms, too, of the gout had assailed him; and he had most reluctantly been compelled to allow himself a few hours' repose at the place from whence he wrote, ere he resumed his travel and completed his saving errand.

What news was this—at once blessed and fearful! My father, indeed, had relented; I was about to be admitted to his forgiveness, restored to his protection, his love! But, should he arrive at my present dwelling, the intelligence of my real child's death would, in all human probability, scarcely fail, in some form or other, to reach him; and this danger could only be obvi-

arrival at the farm too probably threatened: we easily coincide with arguments even far less plausible than these, if they happen to be consonant with our own dearest wishes! I prepared to depart, but could not leave my excellent hostess without sentiments of deep regret and reluctance. The severity of Maria's principles extended only to the guidance of her own minutest actions; while, a latitudinarian in her compassionate allowance for the errors of others, her worthy heart was as ready to pity and excuse the weaknesses it never knew, as it was itself incapable of similar dereliction. The mules which had brought home the widow of Giraud, were still fresh, as, from her natural humanity, they had been only hired from a very near stage: I set forward, then, with the child in the same conveyance with the utmost possible despatch, leaving to my friend the care of transmitting after me my clothes and moveables; and, fortunately, arrived at my father's inn just at the precise moment in which he was preparing to set out from it towards my late abode.

Our meeting was, on both sides, a heart-rending one indeed. Covered with a double

and consuming shame, I knelt to the deceived as well as injured author of my life, and saw the son of strangers pressed to his bosom; nor has repentance for that fatal passion, in which originated the deception then practised on his believing tenderness, ever from that moment quitted this self-accusing heart! My dear parent never once reverted to the horrible subject of my seduction: the Count de Luneville had long since possessed him with the detail of the few, very few, particulars which I had myself been enabled to communicate to Father Louis; but he seemed reluctant to immediately return to Spain, a reluctance for which I could but too well account. He afterwards privately informed Maria (who, as I shall have occasion to relate, soon after became our inmate), that I had been doubly deceived by my seducer, of whose pretended name and rank the Count de Luneville had informed him; for, on journeying to Toledo, the alleged residence of the Judge his father (in order, as he frankly owned to her, to detail the injury I had sustained, and then take summary vengeance, old as he was, by chastizing the violator with his sword), he learned that no

individual of that name or office was resident in that city; nor even had any of its representatives of justice sons or other relations whose ages, persons, or late absence from Spain, could warrant the suspicion of their having, by disguising their true designations under that of De Aguilar, at once disgraced that, themselves, and me.

My honoured parent soon became passionately attached to my Estevan, as I ever fondly denominated him; indeed the enchanting beauty and attractive manners of that highly gifted child could scarcely have failed of drawing to itself the affections of a far less prejudiced and tender heart than that of the nature-subdued veteran, who, as he fondly believed, but loved my infancy over again in his. My father hired a neat cottage in the delicious environs of that blessed town marked as the sacred point of our re-union, and in that same rural abode we dwelt in peace and harmony for several years, during which halcyon period we were still farther blessed by the society of my estimable widowed friend, who had relinquished her farm, and at mine and my father's reiterated re-

quests, at length came to dwell with us and gratitude!

At the termination of this long and comparatively happy period, it was my misfortune to close the eyes of that dear woman; after whose unceasingly regretted loss, my former melancholy returned with a redoubled force; and my father, justly conceiving that every local object and circumstance now served but to feed the passion of my sorrow, proposed to leave our cottage and clustering apple-orchard, and return to Spain. His wish would have been my law, even though it had not been the very reflection of my own most earnest desire: we departed, then, after some weeks' preparation, from France, which, though so often depicted and described as the chosen seat of mirth and festivity, and so frequently resorted to as the fountain of health, had (through, indeed, the consequences of my own indiscretion) proved the tomb of my cheerfulness, my peace, and my strength. The boy Estevan's exceeding aptitude of intellect had been nourished far beyond my poor father's slender means: instruction of every kind, adapted to his tender years, had been instilled with a

liberal hand, and his expansive genius had already yielded an hundred fold produce for the culture it had received.

On our arrival in Spain, my father chose for our residence the vicinity of Madrid, with a view to facilitate aids of the first degree of respectability to the studies of our beloved Estevan: we resided on the spot he thus selected for three years, when the demise of my uncle made my father master of the small domain we now inhabit, and to which we almost immediately afterwards removed. The circumstance of my father's succession to the property of his brother opened anew the but half-healed wounds of my much disturbed conscience: there were other relations much more indigent than ourselves, and but one degree farther removed, to whom, when it should please heaven to remove my father and myself, the estate ought, in justice, to have reverted; instead of which, it would now descend to a stranger to our blood, for such was Estevan; the illegitimacy of whose supposed birth the pride and tenderness of my generous father concealed, not only for the purpose of leaving him his fortune, but through a

delicacy towards my feelings, which a thousand times augmented my shame and my remorse. Had my life been the forfeit of my sincerity, how freely would I have yielded it up, rather than exist a party to such injustice! But, alas! my sinful pride rendered my fame dearer to me than my virtue had been, and I was a doubly guilty accessary to an already criminal deception.

My regret fed itself upon my blood; I daily declined; and my long, wakeful, feverish, restless, morning-wishing nights were such as those only who have nourished a bosomed, a blameful secret, can conceive of. The blessed ministry of the veiled sister of the Chapel of the Glade, her holy prayers, her pure and cheerful sanctity, and salutiferous balsams, long replenished my waning lamp of life; but the discovery of your supposed affinity to Estevan was a sudden shock which nearly extinguished its feeble and reluctant flame. While I beheld you only as his stranger benefactor, I enjoyed comparative serenity; nay, even the torch of Hope itself seemed to illumine the dreary path which led to my untimely grave; for, dear as my own

bosom's fruit had been to me, had long since become the alien youth; and well I knew your rectitude of nature, your nobleness of soul, would more than perform to him all the good deeds your munificence had, even in its dawn, promised: where could the deserted Estevan, from whomsoever derived, meet a nobler, a more sufficient patron than the nature-isolated Count de Ximenes?—or, still more, where might that exalted patron, even all illustrious as he was, seek a more bounty-ennobling subject than the bright, the heaven-minted child of my care? But when, my lord, you privately owned him as your *grandson*, and afterwards prepared, by public adoption, to make him the *heir* of your *treasures*, your *name*, then, oh! then it was that all hell poured its burning battalions of torments into my conscious heart!

My father's humble pittance of property might now, indeed, be permitted to flow into its nature-destined channel, and our indigent relatives might enjoy their rights; but, oh! at the expense of how mighty a wrong! Your immense wealth, your untarnished, your princely name, was to become the heirdom of an undesignated stranger,

the son of obscurity—perhaps of shame, of guilt! Imagine, my lord (alas! you nor aught human ever can imagine), the mighty struggles of my deceit-limed soul during the progressive altitude of your offered honours; and learn, oh! learn with pity, the *added* chains of force by which I was *secretly* withheld from accepting them. Stern *conscience* interposed, indeed, a *two-fold* bar to my compliance; but He, the Heavenly Justicer, who inflicted my retributive torments, knows that my *alleged* objection to the acceptance of your glorious offers weighed in the balance of rejection heavy, even as that which was *concealed*. But the conflict has been too forceful; my life is the forfeit of my dissimulation. I can no longer exist with the important secret on my mind, nor even die without disclosing it.

Yet, oh! my gracious lord, it surely needs not my ineloquent pen, my feeble adjurations, to urge, to induce you not to again cast utterly down the noble youth whom your own assisting hand has led up to the very summit of success: let his descent, at least, be gradual; let it be honourable to your own sensibility, as tender to

his; and well I know that Estevan's conduct under the pressure of misfortune will prove how worthy he was of prosperity! And now, farewell, my honoured lord; much venerated parent of my heart's first fatal love, farewell! And that length of days, restored peace, and hourly increasing honours, may be your's, is, in the article of death, the fervent prayer of

BLANCHE GOMEZ.

Towards nightfall, the good Superior of St. Benedict, followed by the Count de Ximenes, his Estella, her beloved Carlos, and the faithful Leon, proceeded to the Chapel of the Glade, where the pious priest said a mass for the souls of the departed of former days; after which, all united in prayers for the rest of the deeply penitent and long suffering Blanche; while tears of mingled pity, gratitude, and respect, embalmed the memory of that erring but estimable woman, those of De Ximenes were tinged with peculiar bitterness, as he lamented the heavy fate of one whose injuries, he feared, still weighed down the soul of his unhappy son from heaven. Their pious vespers

ended, Carlos earnestly requested the Count's permission to visit the cottage of paternal sorrow, and share the mournful vigil of his early benefactor, the venerable Gomez, and, sanctioned also by the consent of her regained parent, Estella prepared to accompany the tender purpose of her son; when the farewells of the deeply melancholy party were suddenly interrupted by fearful hollow groans, which, at short intervals, broke loud and awfully upon the startled ear of night. At those sounds of anguish, which now first, after so long a period of peace and serenity, invaded the sanctuary bought by honour, by virtue's martyrdom, and piety's benedictions, all started aghast—all trembled; but, soon resuming fortitude, they issued, bearing lamps, forth from the Chapel, to ascertain the cause from whence their alarm proceeded.

Chap. XV.

A MAN habited like a Pilgrim lay extended before the crosses of the Glade; his eyes were closed, and he seemed to breathe no longer. Don Carlos instantly raised and bore the insensate object to the shelter of the Chapel: and Leon hastened to the hermitage for some restoratives, which Estella directed him where to find, while she bathed the temples of the Pilgrim with cold and limpid water: signs of returning animation were soon exhibited by the subject of her humane cares, and Leon, having returned with the ready speed of unpurchased kindness, prevailed upon the poor man, who was now able to sit up, to swallow a small cup of a generous cordial, which soon perfected his restoration to reason, and gave also temporary ease, as he acknowledged, to the agonizing internal pain which had occasioned his swoon.

But there remained a ghastly lividness on his skin, a shrunken expression in every suffering-worn feature, and a glazedness in his deeply sunk eyes, which silently warned the experienced observers that the Pilgrim rapidly approached the bourn of all mortal travel: the sufferer needed not to be apprised of his condition by his fellow beings; there was an internal herald which imperiously announced his fast approaching doom. "I am," said he, in a hollow voice, "unworthy to die (more especially unconfessed) in this holy place. I had not far to travel to the castle De Ximenes, whose antient lord, as I have heard during my pilgrimage, is still alive; for I have a disclosure to make and a charge to render up which it much concerns him to hear and to receive. From thence I would, had nature so far have held out, have dragged my trembling limbs to the Monastery of St. Benedict, to implore the ever merciful spiritual as well as temporal aids of the church, or, failing in my purpose, the charity of the lord of the domain would doubtless have brought them to an expiring penitent."

"Neither your mission or your solemn wish

will remain incomplete," said the surprised father of Estella, advancing full before the Pilgrim. "I am the Count de Ximenes, and yon holy man is the Superior of the Monastery of St. Benedict."

"Blessed be heaven!" exclaimed the Pilgrim, "for its good mercies extended toward an unworthy sinner. Let all retire, noble Sir, save yourself and that holy father and sister of the church; and I will, if heaven stops not short my guilty breath, reveal the sins which load my blotted soul."

Don Carlos, having consulted the eyes of his grandfather, instantly retired, and was followed by Leon; then between many long and painful pauses, the Pilgrim, in a low but articulate voice, repeated the following particulars, of which the Count de Ximenes made notes, while the Superior strove to soothe him with hopes of divine mercy; and Estella, supporting the head of the penitent, bathed from time to time his temples with an odorous liquid, or moistened his parched lips with a cool and reviving syrup.

The Pilgrim's Story.

"My name is Sebastian de Firendez; my family, though but *new* christians, were all true believers, and, save my wretched self, of untainted honour. I was the only and much beloved child of my father, who was very rich, and lived in great luxury and splendour at Madrid. My education was, as may be readily believed, not neglected, neither was my most trivial wish ever restrained; I therefore, being of strong passions and a sanguine temperament, profiting less than I ought to have done by the great expense lavished on my improvement, plunged, ere I had scarcely reached manhood, into every species of dissipation and licentiousness, and finally broke both my parents' spirits and heartsby my frantic course of profligacy. For an interval, and indeed but a short one, after their deaths, my soul was awakened to regret and remorse; but genuine, hopeful, lasting repentance is seldom the fruit of extensive, of irreparable sin, and to deaden the tormenting visitings of my goaded conscience, I rushed into a fresh vortex of ostentatious extravagance and libertine excess.

"After a few years of infamous indulgence, I had completely annihilated every vestige of credit as well as fortune; and from being a dupe, I now commenced a sharper and a gambler. But detection and disgrace soon followed, like hell-dogs, the track of my crimes; and more than seventeen years since I fled from Madrid towards the sea coast, resolved, and indeed compelled, by my necessities and enormities, to leave my native land for ever, and seek a new and strange shore for the scene of future depredations. Mounted on a fleet horse, I journeyed with all possible expedition, and had reached even thus far on my way, when, near the very spot where yon tall crosses record the fearful history of somewhat more recent crimes, two fierce and armed robbers, rushing from the thicket which screens this holy edifice, stopped my horse, and seized and threw me to the ground; they then, with horrid imprecations and deadly threats, to overawe my already unavailing resistance, proceeded to secure my weapons, and the little specie and few valuables with which my sinister arts had furnished me.

"Having completed the spoliation of my

niggard means, they deliberately prepared to deprive me of my last wretched possession, my worthless life: I tendered it too lightly to wish to be indebted for so vile a favour to still viler donors, and sullenly and silently waited that half-desired dismission which their pointed stilettos threatened; when the sudden arrival of another of the party, who seemed to be its leader, changed the colour of my destiny. This last comer expressed his approbation of the fortitude with which I entertained my dangerous condition, a fortitude of remorseless despairing guilt, which to his equally impious mind appeared meritorious courage; and he interposed in my behalf with his comrades, reminding them of the scantiness of their band, which the cross, the wheel, and the gallies, had greatly thinned; and, again adverting to the hardiness of my deportment, proposed that I should have the alternative, against instant death, of enlisting in their service offered to my acceptance: my captors agreed to the suggestion of their chief, and, the weakness of self-preservation returning, I consented to purchase life at the risk of eternal salvation.

"These wretches held their principal resort in a cave of a mountain considerably distant from the spot on which they had assaulted me, and I remained a prisoner in their hellish abode some few days; after which period, being deemed sufficiently initiated, I prowled in their society, and assisted at the sacking of many a hapless wayfarer, but never consented to dip my hands in blood: the sordidness of their rapine, not less than the cruelty with which they effected it, annoyed the effeminacy of my own wickedness. Vice and crime, unarrayed in the specious and seductive vesture of elegance and luxury, I had been unaccustomed to contemplate; the fierce and loathsome features of undisguised guilt at once terrified and disgusted my soul; and I innately resolved to seize the first eligible opportunity of escaping from my abhorred profession, and still more abhorred associates. But some little time elapsed ere a probability of effecting my desired purpose occurred: meanwhile, the more effectually to secure the success of my design, I began to affect an unusual predilection for our mode of life, and failed not beside, on every occasion, to separately possess my com-

rades with a belief of my entire devotion to their individual interests. Time, at length, very slowly to my eager wishes, brought on the desired emancipation.

"The three banditti having one evening set forth on a previously planned predatory excursion, I, in turn, was left the host and guard of our richly spoil-hoarded cave; and, the moment I thought my fell companions had retired to a sufficient distance, I commenced preparations for my flight, by selecting from our joint depository a certain sum of specie not greatly exceeding that of which I had been originally plundered by them, and, providing myself also with a hunting bottle of the best wine and a few manchets, I threw over my whole person a large dark *roquelaure*, which had been the property of some other luckless traveller, and hastened forth from the cave to gain an asylum, which I had before discovered by an accident which I shall now proceed to relate. Some time previously to my escape, I was sent by the depredators, as being a new face, and therefore less obnoxious to suspicion, to the hamlet dependent on the castle De Ximenes to purchase provisions:

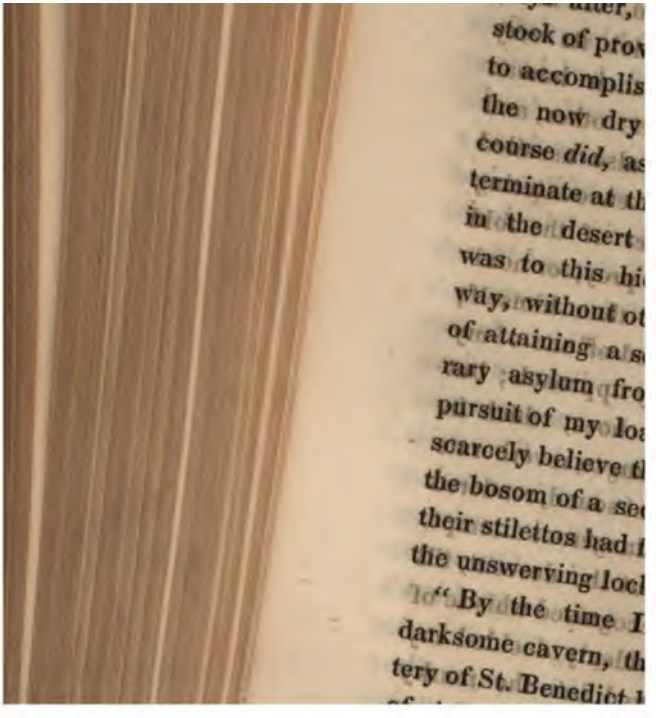
struck with admiration by the splendid architecture of that noble pile, I surveyed its whole exterior most attentively, and then strayed to the gloomy desolated edifice called the Casa Niegra, which is situated in the vicinity of the castle; and having also, from motives of curiosity, rounded that dreary mansion, to which appertained, as I judged from the circuit of its ivy-mantled garden-walls, a considerable extent of ground, I took my way through the rich fields which surrounded it towards our cave. The heat of the day was excessive, and, pausing near a goatherd who sat beneath the shadow of a large tree, watching his flock, I refreshed myself from the contents of the basket with which I was loaded. Solitude often begets strange fellowships: my disguise was that of a peasant, and the simple and garrulous swain readily entered into a conversation which my excited curiosity soon turned upon the subject of the ruinated pile which frowned in sombre majesty before us.

"The Casa Niegra was, he said, a fearful, dismal abode, haunted by foul fiends and unquiet spirits, and had for ages remained un-

tenanted of mortal dwellers, till the present cruel Count de Ximenes had made it the prison-house of his only heir, a beautiful young maid, who had loved at his command, and was now sentenced to that direful punishment only because she could not, at his pleasure, unlove again her once affianced lord: the carle then rapidly rehearsed a long string of absurd legends respecting the horrors which, in the olden times, had been acted in that awful structure, and the various forms and sounds of fear with which it had even down to the present times remained infested; and, rising from his grassy seat, and walking a few paces from it, he pointed out to my notice a low cavernous arch of masonry which was sunk considerably beyond the surface of the green sward, and all overgrown with briars, brambles, and rank weeds. This, he said, was the reputed avenue by which the unearthly visitants of the Casa Niegra passed to and fro from their foul resort; and added, that, when he was some years younger, being simpler and less cautious than he had now become, he had, having missed one of his goats who was of a most adventurous disposition, ventured to force his way into the

pening, and crawl along it for a few yards, in opes to discover the rover; but had seen a bright nd flaming light right before him, which so con- ounded and horrified his senses, that he wonder- d he had not died in that frightful labyrinth. St. Benedict, whose aid he invoked, had how- ver lent him strength to extricate himself; 'and would not (concluded the carle) so much as eep into it again for all the treasures of Peru.'

"I enquired the time of day at which he had een the light which had so much alarmed him, nd also compared the position of the cavernous rch with the situation of the Casa Niegra, from hich it was not too far distant to disprove the robability of its being a subterraneous passage, r perhaps, as was not uncustomary in the con- truction of antient buildings, it had been ori- inally designed to serve as an extensive water- ourse from the cascades or fountains of its once oble garden; at all events, I little doubted but t was the blaze of meridian day again visible at he extremity of the passage which had so greatly isconcerted the courage of the communicative oatherd; and, thus believing, determined, at a roper opportunity, to myself explore its secrets.



dreary journey, I should have found the conveyance of a torch or lamp difficult, if not altogether impracticable. At the brink of the hideous abyss I involuntarily paused: the hour, the darkness, the horrors with which its very name was invested, all exerted their human thraldom over my shuddering heart: other, and perhaps juster, causes of alarm also assailed me; I dreaded the probability of encountering in my dreary path the fierce robber of the fold snarling over his blood-weltered prey, or noxious reptiles scarcely less deadly than himself; and wished, at least, to have fired off one of my pistols, as the precursor of my approach; but my knowledge of the tell-tale echoes, which in that dreary spot were ever waiting to reverberate with tenfold tongue the slightest sound, rendered me cautious of hazarding the dangerous attempt. Still I hovered reluctant about the descent, till the distant but too well recognised whistle of my hateful companions suddenly decided my wavering resolves. I plunged into the murky den, from whence would to heaven I had never more emerged!—it contained nought so fell, so fearful, as myself; and I soon again saw the

bright lamp of heaven, which, suspended in soft and tranquil majesty, shed wide her silvery beams.

"Ascending from the dank channel of the fountain, I traversed with noiseless footfall the deeply grass-grown walks of the garden, but was sometimes necessitated to cut my way through its narrowest paths, across which the commixing branches of various and long undisciplined vegetation had formed leafy labyrinths of shade almost impervious to the light, and exceedingly difficult of egress; but by the assistance which my stiletto afforded me, I escaped from those verdant entanglements to the more open part of the garden: the moon, then at her fullest growth, afforded, as I had previously calculated, ample light to guide me to the shelter still offered by a range of half-ruinated cloisters, which I had observed, in my previous visit, had originally run the whole length of the back front of the Casa Niegra, in which there appeared not one window, nor could I, at first, discover any traces of a door by which the garden could ever have been entered from the house; a circumstance which appeared extremely singular,

till, on a closer inspection, I discerned in the centre of the back front traces of a somewhat lighter-coloured masonry than that of which the edifice was generally constructed, which plainly pointed out the outlines of a large door seemingly long since built up; for an immense almond tree had reared itself before it, which being now, by the autumnal gales, divested of a portion of its late luxuriant honours, disclosed a secret, which, on my first visit to the garden, they had imperviously concealed. From either side of this tree, cloisters painted in the arabesque style had branched out the whole length of the building, and a part of this erection, which still retained its leaded roofing, promised a no unacceptable shelter from the dew which had long been descending, and with which my clothes were already damp, and my blood chilled. With some difficulty I removed a fragment of one of the broken marble pedestals, which had probably been formerly designed to support orange-tree tubs or urns of flowers, to a more eligible situation, and, wrapping myself up closely in my roquelaure, I sat down, and prepared to yield to the invitations of slumber.

"The midnight hour had just sounded, when the wall, a few paces from me, seemed to open, and a tall figure of a woman, clothed in white, and bearing a lamp, issued from the aperture! You, Count de Ximenes, who have announced yourself the Lord of the Domain, and doubtless are well acquainted with the situation of the cloisters, and the impracticability of the blocked up portal, will not confound *that* with the spot at which the figure appeared; it was, in fact, considerably distant from it: the back of the house was, as I have before said, painted as high as the cloisters reached; and not two minutes before I had passed my hand over the smooth glazy surface of the very place from which the appearance now glided! I felt my hair bristle as I gazed upon it, and the whole mass of evidence in favour of the agency of spirits rushed over my memory. I remained silent, motionless, scarcely breathing; every sense seeming lost or concentrated in that of vision only!

"The figure remained for some time immovable, and pointing the lamp straightforward; but suddenly it turned, and glided up to the very

place where I sat. An exclamation of horror, I believe, escaped me, for the form started, uttered some harsh dissonant sounds, and let fall the lamp, which was not, however, extinguished. I snatched it instantly up, for my courage was naturally restored by that proof of the corresponding weakness of humanity which the imagined spirit had just exhibited, and, holding up the lamp, saw a luxuriantly formed female, young, and not unhandsome, clothed in a slight night dress, but her neck, arms, ears, and head, adorned with precious chains and clusters of sparkling diamonds.

"She now removed a white mantle which hung over what, on her nearer approach, I had believed to be a large bundle; and I discovered, with increased surprise, that her burthen consisted of a *beautiful sleeping boy*, seemingly nine or ten months old. The little angel remained in undisturbed repose, and the young female, who, after the expression of her first surprise rather than alarm had continued entirely at her ease, made several comic and highly expressive gestures, by which she seemed to intimate high satisfaction at my so unexpected

company, but appeared somewhat disconcerted when she could not again discover the means by which she had entered the cloisters, the secret door (for such it doubtless was) having immediately reclosed by a spring, which I, as well as herself, found it utterly impossible to find; neither could the closest scrutiny of eye or hand detect the aperture it guarded. My extraordinary companion soon, however, appeared to have entirely forgotten the temporary chagrin which this distressing circumstance had occasioned to her, and gave way to a strain of wild and unmannered mirth: she laughed violently, sung in harsh tones and unintelligible articulation, danced, and clapped her hands, the size and colour of which seemed to hint that they were decked with *unaccustomary* adornments; and, as if more strongly to enforce this probability, she paused repeatedly in her antics, to display more fully her ornaments to my inspection. She unfastened the rich links of jewels which she wore, and held them delightedly up to my eyes, and then motioned, that I should again replace them on her arms and bosom.

"I vainly endeavoured to enter into discourse

with her in my native tongue, and then, imagining she might be a foreigner, addressed her in French and Italian. Equally unsuccessful in obtaining an articulate reply in those languages as in Spanish, I at length became convinced that she either would not or *could* not speak; and, desisting from farther attempts at *rational* intercourse, permitted myself to be, by turns, the agent or the butt of her playful extravaganeies.

"Night, solitude, and nature, at length began to stir my blood and quicken my pulse, and I offered to clasp the midnight wanderer in my arms: but modesty had not neglected to exact her due tribute of the poor natural, whose cheeks, by turns, reddened and grew white at my freedoms. This silent but expressive reproof served but to blow more strongly my rebellious fires: I ventured to press her bosom, when, laying the infant she had uniformly borne in her arms upon the cloister's pavement, while her hitherto inexpressive eyes lightened with the fires of affronted chastity, she threw herself into an attitude which imaged her resolve to resist my wanton advances by dint of blows.

"Hoping to terrify her into submission, I now drew my stiletto, which I presented to her throat; but the action only excited afresh her ire, and animated the nerve of her defence. With rageful cries she rushed upon me, and, unintimidated by the inequality of the contest, struggled to wrest the glittering weapon from my grasp: she succeeded in grappling the hilt, and was, by nature as well as passion, so uncommonly strong, as to prove, in reality, not the contemptible opponent I had at first conceived her, more particularly as I restrained, in a great measure, my own strength, in order by the protraction of our contest the more effectually to exhaust her's. Quickly perceiving her imaginary advantage, she used her whole force to preserve it, and actually obtained possession of the stiletto, which she instantly aimed at my breast. This success was too serious to be allowed: by an instantaneous motion of my arm, I warded off the blow, and, struggling to disarm her, the blade was inverted, and by a sudden jerk buried in her own heart! The life's blood sprung upward in my face like a fountain: she gave one short hickupping scream. By the

moonlight I distinctly saw her eyes roll in the agonies of death: she fell prone across my arm, which involuntarily shrunk from the contact of mortality, and she dropt dead to the stone pavement of the cloisters!

"It was morning's dawn ere I exhibited more signs of animation than herself: I had fainted, and fallen with and beside her; and, having slightly cut my forehead against the jagged fragment of marble on which I had been sitting, it was the blood, which then first probably had begun to ooze from my wound, together with the low wailing cries of the child who lay near, which awakened me to life again; but the wretched maiden was already cold in death! The ghastly lividness of her swollen features, still true to the stamp of fitful idiocy—her large unclosed eyes, which glazed in the fearful immobility of death—glared horribly upon me: her white garments, dyed in her own heart streams—Oh! how did that sight-withering spectacle contrast with the image she had so lately presented to my rebellious passions! Oh! how did the soul-sickening sensations which that spectacle now excited contrast with those which I had so re-

cently experienced! Oh! how forcibly torturous was the reproach thus conveyed from a silent but irresistible accuser!

"I administered to the keen and impatient hunger of the babe, by feeding him with manchet steeped in wine: his little limbs, being chilled and cramped with the contact of the cold bed on which he had for hours reposed, I chafed them with my hand, and, while employed in this office, discovered that he wore a rich coral superbly set in gold, on which was inscribed the cyphers "E. X." I robbed the unconscious baby of this his unprized treasure, but placed what I supposed to be an amulet, which was wrapped in rich brocade, and suspended to it, within the folds of his clothing; and while awkwardly, and with a timid hand, performing this unaccustomed office, discovered, in the very centre of the child's breast, a heart-shaped mole of azure hue."

Estella and her parent here exchanged glances which inferred their consciousness of the existence of that mark of marvel on the bosom of Don Carlos; they then turned their eyes and attention towards the wretched penitent, who, overpower-

ed by the recollection of those appalling events, had again fainted. Estella was actively and eminently serviceable in his restoration; she then proposed that the remainder of his confession should be deferred for a few hours, during which he should take refreshment and indulge repose. "Heaven," said she, "which has so wondrously restored to my widowed arms the long lost pledge of my Carlos's love, will not fail, at its *own* good time, to reveal (if it so sees good) the whole mystery of its omnipotent workings in my favour; but if I have *already* learned *enough*, let me be thankful for the satisfaction deigned to be accorded, nor seek to farther satisfy even a *mother's* interest at the precious price of the *safety* of a fellow being."

The Pilgrim, who appeared somewhat reanimated by the effects of a medicine which she had administered, on his recovery from the swoon, was earnest to be permitted to recommence his confession; but Estella, the anxious, the adoring mother, whose very soul had seemed to look forth at her eyes while the narratives were rehearsed which had, at length, thrown

light upon the long dark labyrinth of her mystic woes, *she* it was who forbade the completion of that very satisfaction she most desired, thus sacrificing to humanity her own most heart-twined wishes.

The good Superior had, immediately on the arrival of the Pilgrim, dispatched a young novice of the order, who was usually in attendance on his person, to the hospitalry dependent on the Chapel, but situated near the monastery, with directions that a commodious litter and proper assistants should, with all speed, be dispatched for the conveyance of the Pilgrim thither: meantime the hermit's mattress had been brought from the hermitage, together with several cushions, and spread upon the chapel pavement for the temporary accommodation of the sick man, upon whom Leon de Silva came to remain in close attendance; he brought also some slight refreshments for his fatigue and emotion-exhausted auditors. The Superior and the Count de Ximenes were both desirous of sharing the duty of Leon; and Estella, perceiving that a gentle slumber was

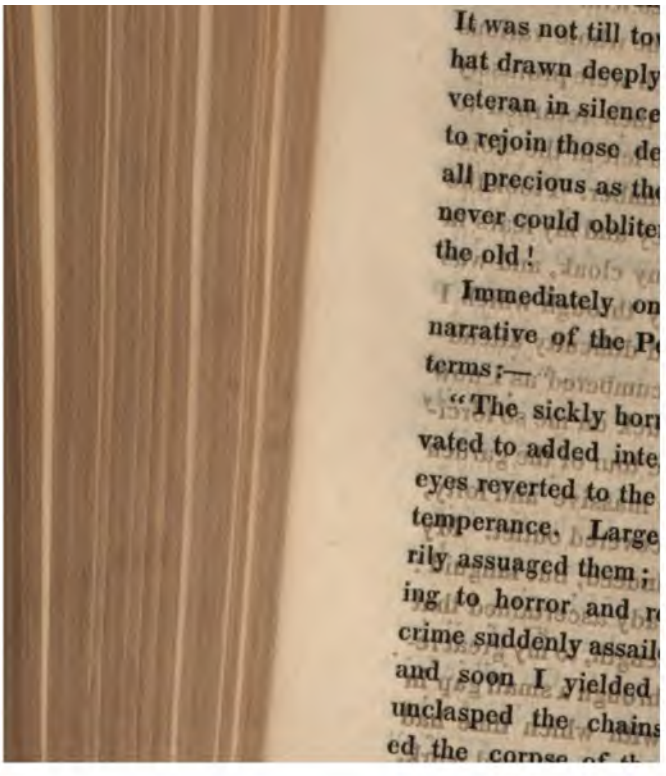
imperceptibly weighing down the heavy lids of the patient, bent her ready knee for her father's benediction, presenting, with joyful tears, her Carlos (who had just entered the Chapel to enquire her commands) to share in the precious boon. It was accorded, with looks of shame which seemed to ask of Heaven how he had himself deserved such pious homage. The tender mother and her devoted son then directed their hasty steps to the house of mourning.

None, save such dearly estimated visitants as the veiled sister, and the youth whom he might never cease to love, could have roused the desolated parent from the silent stupor of his fruitless woe: he led them to view the coffined remains of his only earthly treasure, and, lifting up his voice, felt relief as he wept anew; while Estella directed his attention to the benign smile, imprinted on the lips of Blanche, which seemed to announce the peace of acceptation. To wile the unhappy old man for a short interval from the indulgence of his paternal regrets, she then related the tender wondrous tale of her (so lately self-unknown) affinity to his supposed grandson, the eventful particulars which had

Chap. XII.

The mother and son had passed several hours with the venerable mourner, when Leon hastily arrived at the cottage to summon his lady to the Chapel, where the Pilgrim prepared to complete his relation. Estella parted not from the veteran protector of her son till she had promised the earliest possible return, and, kissing with warm gratitude the cold lips of her who, though really less than mother to her Carlos, had proved for him even more than a mother's cares, departed for the Chapel of the Glade, attended by the faithful Leon, leaving, at his own earnest request, her son alone with the pale form of Blanche.

And now it was, that, unobserved of all, he yielded up his grateful heart to the full indulgence of its swelling grief for that object who, next to the *real* source of his life, was still of all creation the nearest and dearest to its most pure affections. Gomez understood too well the



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stained veil, I bore the body to the basin of the now exhausted fountain, and, covering it with long grass and withered branches with which the garden abounded, heaped over the whole various loose fragments of marble, which were profusely scattered around the spot. I then returned to the devoted infant, which I had left in the cloisters: he had again fallen into slumber. I took the hapless little victim of my policy and my fears in my arms, covered him with my cloak, and was preparing to return by the way through which I had entered, when the added difficulty attending such a mode of egress, encumbered as I now was with a living burthen, struck on me so forcibly, that I once more made the tour of the garden walls, which are exceedingly massive and lofty, in search of some yet undiscovered outlet. My hopes on the subject were, indeed, but languid: I had, as I imagined, already ascertained that none such existed; when at length, to my great relief, I thought I perceived, through a small gap in the mantling ivy-garment with which time had robed them, some slight vestiges of wood work. With my fatal stiletto I speedily cut away at that spot the fortunately but thinly interlacing vegeta-

tion, and with joy discovered a low oaken postern, the time and weather-cankered bolts of which I with great difficulty undrew, and, gently pressing rather than cutting my way through the verdant tapestry with which the outer side of the wall was also guarded, I pulled the postern after me, replaced in the best manner I was able its natural drapery, and then, with timorous footsteps, sallied forth into the fields. The extreme earliness of the hour left them still solitary of the human race, and, cautiously avoiding the path which led to the hamlet of the castle, I struck into an adjacent wood in a phrenzy of terror and dismay.

"My intention, when I first quitted the garden of the Casa Niegra, was to have dropped the infant boy at the door of some cottage whose inhabitants were still unrisen, and so leave him to his fate; but such were the combined terrors, which, the more I cooled into sober reflection, shook my mind respecting the double pursuit I might most justly apprehend, that I had, as I have said, not only struck away from instead of towards the habitations of man, but was (oh, selfishness of guilt!) on the very point of deserting the harmless outcast myself had made

to become the morsel of some famished wolf or bird of prey, the only denizens of that savage place; when I was startled by a deep and long-drawn sigh, and, glancing a few paces forward in the direction from whence the sound seemed to proceed, perceived, in the grey light of a heavy misty morning, a woman of gigantic proportions, wrapped in a dark red mantle: she was standing beneath a blasted oak, and said, in a voice which needed to be heard but once to be remembered for ever, 'How fare you, brother wanderer?'

"By this time I had (somewhat timidly I confess) come up close to her: she waited not my response to her question, but thus continued: 'You look but palely, for the red wine tints not the cheek of him who drained its sparkling juice in fear; while a paler liquid shall cause those of the innocent to glow with roseate hue. Look there! and tell me whether you know not of one who will relish that vessel's contents.' She pointed to a large flask of milk which stood on the turf beside her.

"At that moment the child, which I carried

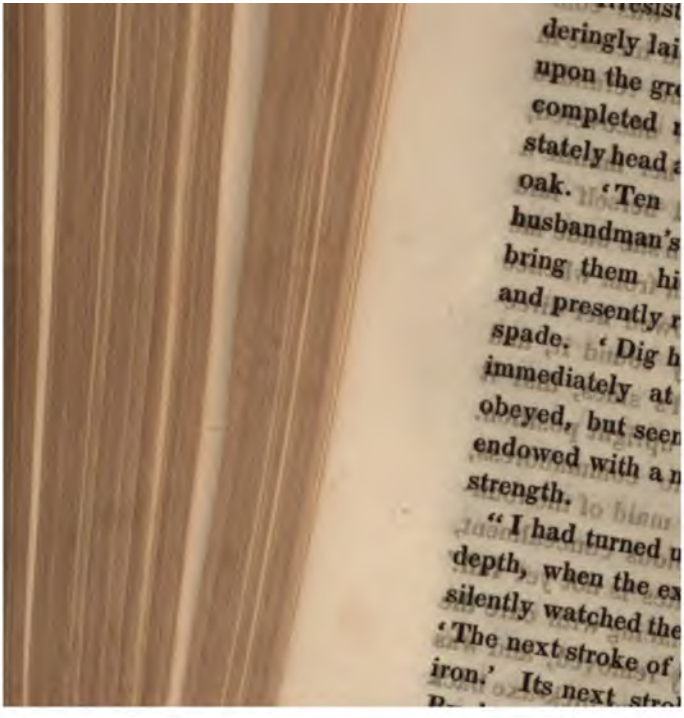
enveloped beneath my ample roquelaure, awoke, and wailed most bitterly. 'You have had but a flinching companion at the flagon, it must be owned,' pursued she, earnestly regarding the child, which I had uncovered, and soothed into silence: 'this will stead his palate *best!*' She presented the flask of milk, and, knowing no readier method to convey part of its contents to the lips of the thirsty boy, I held my palm hollow to receive some. 'Hold off!' cried the female, in a voice of thunder: 'your hands are bloody!'

"I felt a deadly revulsion throughout my whole system, and, starting from her, could not avoid examining my hands. 'I have washed them,' I involuntarily murmured.'—'Still I can see their stains,' she replied; 'I saw, too, how they were acquired.'—'You saw?' reiterated I; 'how?'—'In the sun's looking-glass,' answered my accuser: 'the pale regent of night shuddered in her sphere as she reflected the death-stiffened features of her hapless *namesake!*'

"I felt the presence of a superior influence, and fell upon my knees before that form of fear.

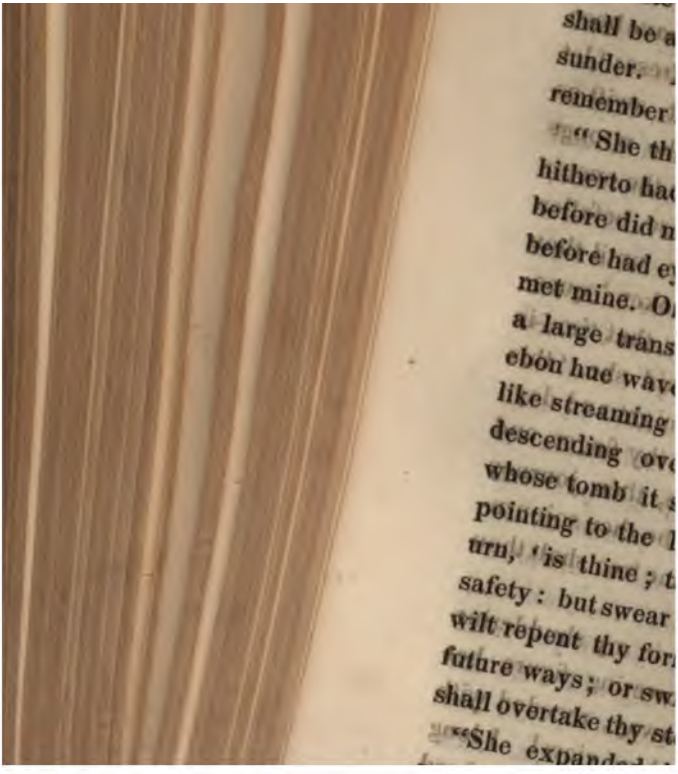
'If,' said I, 'you can indeed truly read the story of the dreadful past, you must know that my *intents* were bloodless.'—'But not, therefore, *guiltless*,' she rejoined. 'You have also added wrong unto wrong. Thy last crime now lays at once within and withoutside of thy labouring heart: ease it at least of that part of its burthen which is removable.' She pointed to my left breast, within which side of my vest I had secreted the jewels of which I had despoiled the corse of the dumb female.

"While thus adjuring me, the mysterious being had been employed in nourishing the child from the flask of milk, and it now sat smiling and contented on her knee. 'Refund, I say!' she added, 'or thy *life*, thy *soul*, is the forfeit of thy disobedience.'—'And *who*,' faltered I, 'are *you*, who make this formidable accusation and demand, or denounce a vengeance so comprehensive?'—'I *was*,' she replied, 'the victim of faithful love: I *am* its guardian; nor will we ever part till I have reft you of all you bore forth through the low postern of the garden of the Casa Niegra. *Here* I already hold the most *precious* part of your spoils; but a neck-



me to unclose: I easily broke the clay-like cement with which the mouth of the vessel was guarded; it was filled to the brim with pieces of Moorish coin, all of bright gold. I was commanded to dislodge this treasure, and inclose in the urn which had contained it the refunded jewels. The vessel now remained uncovered, but the female drew from beneath her mantle a breast piece of polished steel, and herself laid it over the mouth of the urn, which she bade me straightway restore to the earth from whence I had taken it. I implicitly followed her direction, laying the earth carefully round it, and pressing it close to the vessel's sides, that it might remain firmly fixed in an upright position.

"'Now,' said my majestic commandress, 'throw in the *earth*: the poor maid of the fountain has sad need of such pious concealment, but the *time* for her due rites is not yet full.' I completed my task by replacing with care the sods which I had previously removed, and was then bade to carry the spade and pick-axe back to the place from whence I had brought them. 'We now part for a long season,' said the female, closely folding the child in her arms; 'but Time,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endeavour, by a life of penitence, to mitigate that sentence of eternal justice which I had incurred. 'Be your repentance active as have been your crimes,' said my inscrutable monitress; 'let it not moulder in slothful remorse, but, swift as light, repair to your injured kind the wrongs your sins have wrought them. And on the events which have, since yesterday's sun arose, befallen thee, let thy tongue rest in silence, until thou hast beheld me again.'—'By what token,' questioned I, 'shall I understand when that time is about to be fulfilled?'—'Take,' said she, 'this *ring*; wear it constantly both by night and day; and when thou shalt miss it from thy finger, and knowest not whither it is gone, then journey thou (wheresoever thou mayest be then sojourning) hither, and beneath this same tree shalt thou behold me again.'

"The mystic ring wavered in my shuddering grasp: she drew over her towering figure her mantle, and, turning slowly away, receded with the sleeping child from my aching view! I long remained as root-bound; my strained eyes fixed on the quarter from whence they had caught the last faint traces of her fading form. Finally I

last and fatal offence which had proved the means of untimely death to a fellow being: deep has been my crime, but deep has been the repentance which succeeded its commission; it has still companioned my hours of labour and of rest, of abstinence and of refection, of wakefulness and even of sleep; for my *dreams* have partaken of that master purpose, devoted to which I have lived, and in which I shall die.

"I had not long resided in Palermo ere I became acquainted with a worthy aged silk manufacturer named Martino Lucelli, who had recently experienced a severe misfortune: a bad but specious man, to whom, in the fulness of his confidence and trust, he had delegated the principal care and management of his pecuniary concerns, had recently fled in the night, laden with the profits of fifty years' unremitting industry, economy, and undeviating integrity. The good Lucelli was, in consequence, in a state of insolvency: grief and want were pressing hard upon his either hand; while his aged eyes were threatened with the direst spectacle those of a parent can behold,—that of seeing a beloved and virtuous family want those comforts which his

charitable piety had so often bestowed on others. I rejoiced in possessing the means of restoring him and them to their peaceful home; I satisfied his creditors' demands; and enjoyed the double reward of blessing and being blessed. Lucelli's former friends, too, who, like those of Job, had questioned his sorrows rather than relieved them, now came about him with proffers of added assistance; his late customers, also, were unanimous in their assurances of future countenance and support, and the last days of the good man promised to be even happier than the first.

"In the prodigality of his gratitude, he offered to render up the mastery of his whole establishment to him whose friendship had preserved it; but the interest for my good deeds, if such they deserved to be denominated, which I desired to receive, was not of this world: I would accept neither the whole nor a part of Lucelli's profits, deeds, bills, or bonds; I equally rejected, and required only a shelter beneath his roof, a morsel at his board, and menial mechanical employment in his manufactory, till I could, by constant application, attain the mystery of his

profession, in order to earn thereby of him the bread I needed; for, the whole of my remaining treasure having been employed to reinstate the worthy tradesman, I unavoidably became, in my turn, dependent upon him. With heart expanded as his doors, and open arms, did my excellent friend receive me; and with him I constantly dwelt during the few remaining years of his virtuous and well-spent life, until Heaven was pleased to summon his soul to receive its blest reward. His only son then took his parent's place, continuing to deport himself to me with the same filial deference he had observed towards his father himself, while I loved him as fervently as though I had possessed a paternal claim on that obedience which he accorded me. All things grew and flourished with the virtuous Ottavio; he gave away much, but gained still more, for Heaven repaid his industry and activity, as well as benevolence, an hundred fold.

"I had now breathed the air of Sicily full sixteen years, during which period I had seen the children of my friend's son born and bloom like lovely flowers around me; when, one day, returning on horseback to the city, from which I

had been a few leagues on a visit of charity to a sick family to whom I had acted as the agent of the kind Ottavio's bounty, my horse suddenly took fright, and threw me headlong into a pit by the road side: some labourers, whom my piercing groans had drawn to the scene of my misfortune, hastened to extricate me from my dismal situation, and I was with all possible care conveyed to Palermo, where my excellent young friend, his gentle wife, and their whole amiable family, bestowed upon me every expensive care and tender assistance. None of my limbs were fractured; but the concussion my whole frame had received engendered a violent internal malady, which, by the severity of its torments, soon brought me to the verge of the grave.

"For several weeks I wrestled with agonizing sufferings, and, by the superior strength of my constitution, was enabled to endure them: at length, the goodness of Providence permitted the great skill and ability of my physicians to alleviate the extremity of my infliction; I was enabled, though in a state of extreme weakness and reduction, to leave my bed, and mingle with the family who loved me, and who

were to me unspeakably dear: but a perfect cure of my disorder I was duly warned, by my medical attendants, it was not in the power of their art to bestow. The return of my pains became, however, gradually less violent and less frequent: I gathered strength and spirits during these long intervals, and was beginning to return to my customary habits and avocations, when one morning, upon awaking, *I missed my ring.* Confident of having noticed it upon my finger the last moment ere I retired to rest, and equally so in the integrity of all around me (besides which, my chamber lattices, as well as door, had been all well secured on the inside during the night), I entertained little expectation of recovering that singular deposit, yet deemed it a duty indispensable to institute the strictest possible search for it; but after a few days, finding all my efforts to recover it were vain, I cheerfully resigned myself to this promised pilgrimage, which I deemed its continued absence demanded.

"The most painful task which I had to perform was that of bidding Ottavio Lucelli and his family what would, I felt, prove an eternal farewell; that worthy man was anxious in his

entreaties to be allowed to companion my journey to my native land; but I absolutely forbade his proposition, and, with the affectionate wishes of the amiable and innocent beings who so long had soothed the sorrows of a sinner, I voyaged to Cadiz, where, assuming a pilgrim's habit, I journeyed, by slow degrees, towards the domains of the Count de Ximenes, who was, as I learned in my travel, still living; but of the concerns of his house I dreaded to enquire: my fatal consciousness of being by my former crimes obnoxious to his angry retribution, tied my tongue.

"By many really short, but to my weakened frame most trying, efforts I at length, after being repeatedly detained on the road by relapses of my disorder, reached the *memory-marked wood* in which the mystic assignation so long since adjusted was to take place. The gigantic woman stood erect beneath the blasted oak; but Time, which had, in his unerring course, marked me a victim for the dart of death, had passed *her* by, as it seemed, unheedingly! Yet, thought I, as I gazed upon her unchanged form, Time's sway extends over all *materiality*; and

if she is but a *shadow*, how is it that *reflection* can survive *substance?* I reached the tree, and sunk amazed and exhausted beside her. 'The human soul,' said she, as replying to my *thoughts*, 'is undecaying, *eternal;* question not, then, the multiplied capacities, resources, and vehicles, with which a perpetually progressive existence may accommodate and supply it.'

"Unutterable awe pervaded my frail and flesh-clogged faculties; I bowed my head, breathed a prayer, and told my beads in silence.

"'Sebastian de Firendez!' she said, 'your altered heart will, I know, impel you to rejoice when you learn that the infant, of whom you became, more than seventeen years since, the unintentional preserver, yet lives, and shall long rule in the halls of his blessed mother's heirdom; while that blessed mother's potent intercessions shall win for thee yet a better seat in the courts of Heaven. Behold thy ring; to thee it has performed its mission: now bear it to the Count de Ximenes, and, if thou failest on the way, him whom thou hast borne shall, in turn, bear thee. Deliver to the Count this pledge, and bid him divine its purport; reveal also to

him all thou hast hitherto concealed; then shalt thou hear things which will shew thee how thou hast been made an instrument in the hands of Providence to shape out wonders. Cause the bones of the unburied dead, which nightly groan from the basin of the fountain of the garden of the Casa Niegra, to be laid in hallowed ground; then, and not till then, shalt thou also rest in peace.'

"Measureless curiosity mastered fear. 'And thou,' said I, 'when will *thy* wanderings cease?' She pointed upward toward the blasted oak. 'When,' she replied, 'that pithless trunk shall topple, and from its root seven green branches rise, then shall I be at peace.'

"She held the ring towards my hand; tremblingly I received and replaced it. A dark mist instantly uprose between us, and, heavily clearing the clouds, left, at last, the surrounding prospect unimpeded. I gazed around, but the female was gone! Long did I lay entranced in fear and wonder at the foot of the blasted oak; then slowly pursued my eventful journey. Arrived in view of the white pinnacles of this Chapel, which has upreared its holy head in this savage place since my departure from Spain,

I paused before the stately crosses which record the martyrdom of the just, to offer up my unworthy orisons; but sore travel, dismay, and confusion of soul, brought on a paroxysm of my fierce malady, and my groans of anguish were, by a merciful Providence, permitted to direct the pious and the noble to soothe my sufferings, receive this awful deposit, and record the momentous revealment which so long has burthened my secret soul."

The Pilgrim concluded his confession, and, deeply bowing his heavy head, presented to the Count de Ximenes the pledge of the female of the wood: it was a ring of silver, set with sardonyxes in the figure of a cross; withinside was engraved the words, "*God calls.*"

A slight paleness suddenly invested the cheek of the Count, as, with unshrinking hand, he received the ring and placed it on his finger. "This ring," said he, regarding it momentally with a stern smile, "is a harsh but veritable messenger, and has for ages past been the death summons of my progenitors. When my grandsire drained the rich-spiced baptismal cup to the health of his newborn heir, this same ring floated to his

shrinking lip, nor lived he to once hear that newborn heir request paternal blessing; and when twenty-five circling years had rolled away, that same early heir, then my brave father, just ripe in manhood's bloom and a first conquest's laurelled pride, received it on his extended truncheon from some stranger hand, and the next moment the poisoned shaft of treachery in his breast, nor ere with life left the embattled field which his valour won."

Deeply glowed the late pale cheek of De Ximenes as he ceased; while fortitude and pride, stronger than regret, than fear, than even death's doom itself, added new tension to his unshrinking nerves, new fires to his eyes of defiance: yet they softened as he gazed upon the filial sorrows of the loved ones so newly born to his hopes: he smiled upon and consoled his drooping Estella and her noble son; but his tenderness only enhanced their pious sorrows, and they covered their faces, and wept.

The litter intended to convey the Pilgrim to the hospitalry dependent on the Chapel had, some time ere the conclusion of his confession, arrived: the sufferer implored

the prayers of the veiled sister till he should have passed away, and she assured him of them until her own life's end. He was then placed in the litter, and slowly conveyed towards the Monastery of St. Benedict.

Two days after, the Count, the Superior, Estella, and her son, proceeded to the disconsolate abode of the worthy Gomez, from whence, joining the funereal train which awaited their arrival, they followed the bier of the now happy Blanche, and saw her laid "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest:" nor did the veteran *long* lament her loss;—he did not long survive it!

Chap. XIII.

IMMEDIATELY after these obsequies, the Count de Ximenes commanded that the postern of the garden of the Casa Niegra should be sought for and unclosed; a train of labourers, followed by the servants of the church of St. Benedict, then entered that awful place. The Count de Ximenes, the Superior, Don Carlos, Leon, and a large proportion of the Count's officers and domestics, as well as a number of the brotherhood of St. Benedict, also attended; when a short search served to disclose to their view the time-bleached bones of the ill-fated idiot, which, being placed in a coffin, were conveyed to the cemetery of St. Anastasia, and, with all due and seemly rites of sepulture, there inhumed. The Pilgrim, who had for several hours lain in extremity, was no sooner advised

that these duties had been accorded, than he yielded up his last sigh.

The Count de Ximenes had, previously to this event, dispatched an express to the venerable Donna Gregorio, whose health he had learned, from her son, was still unimpaired, communicating the confession of the Pilgrim, by which her entire innocence respecting the disappearance of the Lady Estella's jewels was so incontestibly proved: this concession, at once so gratifying and surprising, was accompanied by rich donations, and an earnest and almost entreative invitation to visit his castle, and receive a personal re-assurance of his deep regret for the injustice of his former suspicions. In the sentiments thus expressed De Ximenes was undoubtedly sincere: yet was there another motive connected with his invitation of the good old duenna; he wished to profit by the aid of her memory and observations in that train of conjectural evidence which he was collecting respecting the means by which the unfortunate idiot had obtained her strange acquaintance with the secret of the mysterious panel of the cabinet of the Tree of Knowledge.

The gratified dame eagerly accepted a bidding so every way honouring; and while she hastily travelled to the Castle, the Count caused the earth about the blasted oak to be examined for the deposit described by the Pilgrim; and, in the presence of a numerouse concourse of wondering witnesses, the urn of iron was found, and dug from its concealment. The breast-plate which covered it was first examined, on the inside of which was engraved the name of *Beliza:* the jewels remained in perfect preservation and complete number, as when first borne from the prison of the Casa Niegra by the hapless Luna.

Many were the congratulations and greetings which passed between the venerable Uraca, the Count's whole household, and the respectable Duenna and her daughter (the wife of the faithful Leon), who had been the companion of her mother's journey to the Castle. All the light which Donna Gregorio could, from recollection of past circumstances, afford the Count's enquiries was most readily accorded: it was, indeed, trifling, yet not entirely inconclusive. She stated that the idiot girl had always slept in the oriel chamber, in which had

stood the cabinet of the Tree of Knowledge, and that she remembered having often observed her stooping before its unclosed doors, and passing her hands with more than infantile admiration over the raised figures with which its interior was so profusely adorned; thither, too, the *natural* had invariably conveyed every article which she most particularly appreciated: gaudes, confections, or sweetmeats, bestowed by the ever considerate and pitying kindness of her lady, or as little bribes to or rewards for alacrity in the discharge of domestic duties by herself, were regularly deposited in the drawers of that cabinet: there, too, was bestowed in a particular compartment the casket which contained the jewels of the Lady Estella, with which the duenna, coming silently and unexpectedly upon her, had, the very day before her mysterious flight, actually found the unhappy creature decorated. Donna Gregorio added, that it was probably the severe displeasure she had made her sensible of on that occasion which had dwelt on her offence-retentive memory, and in conjunction with the blow she had formerly received, and the still more deeply resented in-

tended deprivation of the infant, induced her to avail herself of her lately accidentally acquired knowledge of the secret of the cabinet as a secure hiding-place for two treasures, the loss of which, she concluded, would inflict the most ample retaliation on her oppressors. Her descent of the stairs of the closet of concealment, and passing the brazen bolted door, was likely the mere result of a sudden curiosity, divested of any intent or attempt at ultimate flight: this last supposition was rendered the more probable by that passage in the deceased Pilgrim's narrative in which he had described the concern expressed by the idiot on discovering that the means of her return to the mansion were cut off. These conclusions were, at least, all highly plausible; and as only circumstantial and conjectural evidence could now be obtained on the subject, those most interested in its developement were, however reluctantly, compelled to again abandon it to that uncertainty, clouded by which it was destined to ultimately remain.

It was the universal opinion that the Count de Ximenes, still faithful to his long and heart-annealed animosity to the House of De Medina,

would devise the heirdom of his wealth, after the demise of his daughter, to Don Carlos only, on the same continued condition on which the testament already executed in his favour rested, which was his assuming, on his succession, the name of *De Ximenes:* but on this point universal opinion most unexpectedly erred. The Count, indeed, made a new testament, by which the whole of his wealth reverted, after the decease of the Lady Estella, to her son Don Carlos; but it was so disposed of only on the express condition of his *retaining his own name of De Medina*, the forfeiture of disobeying that injunction being not only the deprivation of fortune, but also the more fearful one of his maternal grandsire's dying benediction. The motive of this most marked and extraordinary change had its true source in the deep and sincere penitence of the Count for that vast portion of the calamities which had followed his son's untimely death, which his own blind resentment and revenge had elicited and occasioned. The illustrious penitent stopped not *here:* a nobleman of high rank was by him deputed to detail to the reverend Duke de Medina the wondrous events which had lately

been permitted to divulge the long-concealed union of their families, and the existence of a noble scion derived from and equally valuable as honourable to both, and also to tender to his acceptance that perfect amnesty of the past which it was his own heart's dearest remaining earthly desire to receive.

Don Carlos himself was the precious hostage which De Ximenes offered for the sincerity of his returning friendship; and that bright pledge was welcomed by the rejoicing Duke with exulting heart and open arms, since his once proud and widely-spreading family tree had been long verging towards decay. Don Philip, his eldest hope, the successful opponent of the unfortunate Don Alphonso, had scarcely survived a twelvemonth to enjoy his good fortune, leaving the fair and faithless Seraphina a childless widow. Don Alonzo, the Duke's second son and presumptive heir, was indeed a husband, but had for years sighed in a barren bed; nor had any child been born to the house of De Medina, even in its most distant branches, since the hitherto unknown offspring of Estella. The aged Duke eagerly prepared to pilgrimize towards the long-desired, long-despaired-of clasp of returning friend-

ship; while the relenting monarch made him, too, the herald of the banished Count's free pardon and recal to court, and to the restored, the increased favour of his sovereign.

The first meeting of the long-severed friends was private; it was tender, but no less mournful: their sable garments were but slight badges of a grief, heart-seated, life-lasting; each mourned the departed pledges of their youthful strength. De Medina's might, indeed, be called a triple grief, since his last remaining hope, imbecile in mind as person, shivered in a precarious and vacillating existence, like the adust autumnal leaf which the next blast of Boreas may number with the departed honours of the waning year. It was this fellowship in calamity which proved the strongest and most sacred rivet in the bonds of their new-pledged friendship; it was on the very spot which had echoed the last sad sigh of her husband that Estella received the first embrace of his parent; and it was kneeling on that sacred, heart-appreciated spot, that, resisting the tender, earnestly entreative solicitations of both her fathers, she resigned up her heirdom to her son, acknowledging the vow which bound

her whole remaining life to solitude, abstinence, devotion, and complete relinquishment of all worldly incitements.

"Is there, then, *no* gift, *no* parting token, sweet and devoted flower," cried the slow retiring Duke de Medina, "that you would deem worthy of acceptance from the father of him you so dearly mourn?"—"Yes, my lord," replied Estella, "there *is* a boon, the strongest remaining wish of my heart, which you alone have power to accord,—a resting-place in the sepulchre of my husband!"

With streaming eyes the heart-wrung Duke instantly, by gestures, yielded that acquiescence which his pity-paralyzed tongue denied: Estella understood and blessed the welcome affirmative.

"And *me*, Estella," said the firmer but still more afflicted Count de Ximenes; "have you no request to prefer to *your own father?*"

"Yes, my lord, and a dear one, too, believe me," she replied. "If your will deign to permit the blessed words, '*Estella is forgiven*,' to form my epitaph, I shall have not one desire left unaccomplished."

Need it be added, that her last desire *was* accomplished, and the words of pardon, at her own most earnest request, engraved upon the mausoleum of the Medinas during her lifetime?

The departure of the two sorrowing fathers from the Chapel of the Glade was the signal for the audience of many humble but faithful hearts which throbbed towards the lovely recluse with sentiments of tenderness, admiration, and compassion, only less animated than their own. The excellent Donna Gregorio wept over her much-loved former charge the mingled tears of human pity and devotional veneration; but the wife of Leon, with the more ardent character of life's prime feelings, sank in an ecstasy of grief, regret, and disappointment, to the feet of her lady, which she strenuously embraced; while, with the bold phrenzied eloquence of childhood-sown attachment, she vainly strove to deprecate her self-pronounced but unalterable world-renunciation sentence.

Serene, unmoved, as the lucid empress of the night smiles on the rising tide her powerful influence ruffles, remained the veiled sister amidst the persuasive wailings of mundane passion,

a bright succession of splendid festivities in honour of the pardon of De Ximenes and the re-united friendship of the two noblest houses of Spain. The gallant tournament, the crowded bull-feast, and the gorgeous assembly, each, in turn, elicited the most successful display of the valour, the skill, the elegance, the wealth, and the beauty, of the realm: but neither knight nor noble was there who, in fine person, bravery, courtesy, or grace, might vie with the accomplished and illustrious pledge of Estella's sad starred love; and Don Carlos received from his sovereign commendations and expressions of regard far more honouring, more estimated, than the sword of well-earned knighthood which accompanied them.

In the midst of these glorious and heart-inspiring scenes, an indisposition, with which the Count de Ximenes had for some days past secretly contended, rose to an alarming and unconcealable degree of severity: still mentally firm, and unbroken in upon by the agony of his bodily torments, he forthwith commanded himself to be conveyed to his own domain, and, reaching the Chapel of the Glade by forced

journies, expired there, almost immediately after his arrival, in the arms of his Estella. It was past midnight when the Count de Ximenes rendered up his last breath; and some woodmen, proceeding, at sun-rise, to their diurnal labour, discovered the *blasted oak* broken off by the root, and lying athwart their pathway.

The son of Estella immediately succeeded to the sway of the ample domains of De Ximenes, over which, under the plain denomination of Don Carlos de Medina, he ruled with a sway of mercy-attempered justice, piety, and liberality, which soon won him the added title of the *Good*; a distinction far exceeding the highest and proudest which earthly sycophancy ever has or can invent.

The aged Duke de Medina did not long survive the Count de Ximenes; and his second and last remaining son, Don Alonzo, who has been described as exceedingly infirm, became the wearer of his coronet.

When Don Carlos had attained his twenty-first year, he contracted a matrimonial alliance with the beautiful and virtuous Lady Irolita, a daughter of the renowned and princely house

of Lerma. Two days after the solemnization of these distinguished nuptials, Alonzo, the uncle of the blest bridegroom, died, and Don Carlos became Duke of Medina in his stead, jointly governing and enjoying his paternal and maternal heirdoms. Within twelve months from her marriage, his Duchess, the lovely Irolita, presented her lord with twin sons, but never after added to his family. The first of those noble infants was named Ferdinand; the second, Felix, whom the King, soon after his baptism, was graciously pleased to create Count de Ximenes.

The veiled sister of the Chapel of the Glade lived to bless her grandchildren's maturity: a life of extreme temperance and serenity had preserved almost unimpaired the celestial loveliness of her features, shape, and complexion, long after that sincere season when a woman's beauty is alluded to only as a thing that *has been*. The elemosynary bread of the Monastery of St. Benedict, the trifling produce of the little garden of the hermitage, which she uniformly cultivated with her own hands, and a little goat's milk or a few eggs, which she occasionally accepted of from the surrounding peasantry, who

both loved and revered her, had, from her first settlement at the hermitage to the last hour of her life, formed her sole and entire subsistence. She yielded up her pure soul in the arms of her beloved son, in peace and even cheerfulness; confessing to him with her latest breath, that her life had been passed in happiness and content only inferior to that beatitude which beckoning angels now promised to her parting soul, having, soon after the decease of his father, become conscious to that invisible but intellectual intercourse promised to her in his days of life by the husband of her heart.

Carlos, Duke de Medina, inherited the longevity, of his mother, and devoted an extended and healthful life to the practice of every virtue: he volunteered as the soldier of his country and of his God, and chastised the enemies of both with an arm of mighty strength; while the fame of his prowess was only equalled by that of his magnanimity. Returned to his native land, he spread bounty, learning, industry, and piety, wide beyond the princely domains he ruled; "and when the eye saw him, it blessed him." Weighed down, at length, by all-conquering time, he died,

honoured and lamented by his king, his countrymen, and mankind; and was succeeded in his Dukedom of De Medina by his eldest son, Don Ferdinand, who had long, ere the demise of his illustrious parent, become a husband and the father of one son.

His brother, Count Felix de Ximenes, now also assumed the rule of those rich domains, by the will of his noble father, annexed to the proud title in him revived: he, too, had married early, and chosen his bride from the same illustrious house from which his noble mother had been derived. The fair Emerencia de Lerma brought him a form of unrivalled beauty, a mind of priceless worth, and little less than a princess's dowry; but more than all these, she hailed him, in less than eight years from her nuptials, the father of seven fair sons, at whose successive births, the root of the memorable blasted oak constantly put forth a fresh and vigorous branch, which grew and flourished with them. Each of these noble youths sacrificed, in due time, to Hymen; and so propitious proved that deity to their vows, that the name of De Ximenes, thus

restored by the female line, has never since been menaced with the danger of extinction.

"———And the wondrous coffer, my love," said Clifton (as his wife concluded her story), "the contents of *that* alone, divided amongst the descendants of the sainted Estella, were sufficient to have entailed upon her race even regal riches."

"They were so, indeed," replied the lady; "but several of that race chanced to become infected with the rage of alchymy, a mania which has not disappeared from the face of the earth without leaving others behind it among its denizens quite as expensive and little less ridiculous: the substance, therefore, was, in that instance, as it frequently is in many others, sacrificed to the shadow."

"Well," replied Clifton; "I would rather the coffer, with all its precious contents, should have vanished, than the *Family Picture* have been missing. Pray, my love, to whom is posterity indebted for the possession of *that precious memento?*"

"To the faithful Leon de Silva it is that we

owe it," answered the fair Catalina: he was an admirable artist, and executed that expressive piece partly from some original miniatures, partly by the aid of memory, and presented it to Don Carlos soon after the discovery of his birth had taken place."

"Bless, bless his memory for the work!" cried Clifton. "I have now but one query more."

"Tell me, my beloved" (drawing his wife gently towards him, while his lips trembled with the effort he vainly used to dismiss the arch smile which was attempting to sunder them), "tell me, I conjure you, by this *kiss*," he with mock solemnity added, "whether tradition records that the *re-vegetation* of the miraculous Family Tree afforded rest to the wandering, thumbless protectress of the race of De Ximenes?"

"Now, by her *shade* I swear," half-laughingly, half-angrily, cried his wife, struggling to disengage herself from his embrace, "*that sarcastic query shall remain unanswered**."

* We have not been able to discover that Donna Catalina ever broke her oath.

FINIS.